



Boston University  
College of Liberal Arts  
Library

---

Nov. 7

1922

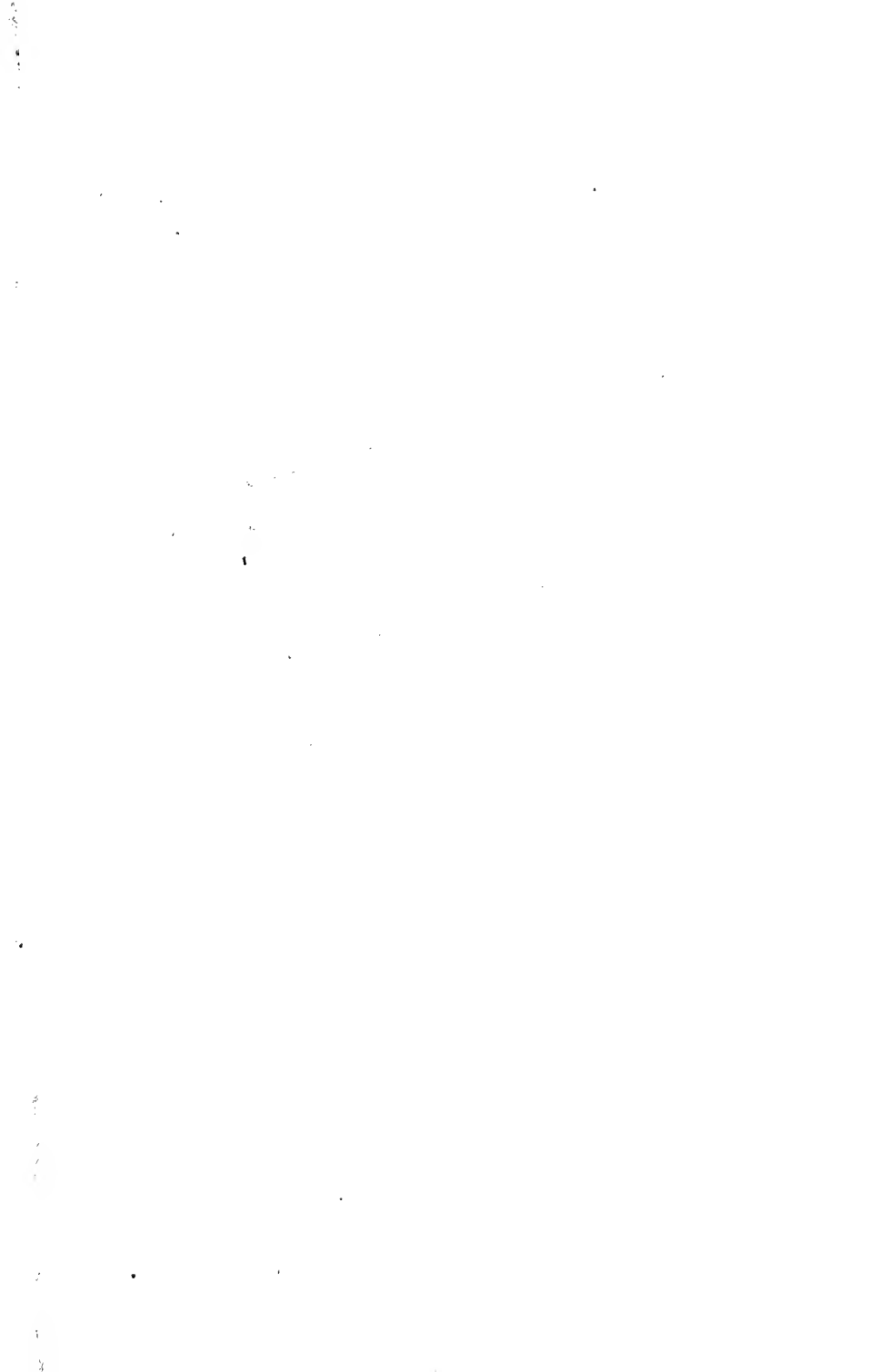
No.

613

7d14

Copy 3

16091





# THE HEALTH MASTER

BY

SAMUEL HOPKINS ADAMS

*Associate Fellow of the American Medical Association*



BOSTON AND NEW YORK  
HOUGHTON, MIFFLIN COMPANY  
The Riverside Press Cambridge

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO  
LIBRARY

Hygiene  
Hygiene  
Title

COPYRIGHT, 1911, 1912, AND 1913, BY THE BUTTERICK PUBLISHING COMPANY

COPYRIGHT, 1913, BY SAMUEL HOPKINS ADAMS

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

*Published November 1913*

16,91

70  
473

TO GEORGE W. GOLER, M.D., a type of the courageous, unselfish, and far-sighted health official, whom the enlightened and progressive city of Rochester, N. Y., hires to keep it well, on the "Chinese plan," this book is inscribed, with the hope that it may, by exercising some influence in the hygienic education of the public, aid the work which he and his fellow guardians of the public health are so laboriously and devotedly performing throughout the nation.





## INTRODUCTORY NOTE

To dogmatise on questions of medical practice is to invite controversy and tempt disaster. The highest wisdom of to-day may be completely refuted by to-morrow's discovery. Therefore, for the simple principles of disease prevention and health protection which I have put into the mouth of my Health Master, I make no claim of finality. In support of them I maintain only that they represent the progressive specialized thought of modern medical science. So far as is practicable I have avoided questions upon which there is serious difference of belief among the authorities. Where it has been necessary to touch upon these, as, for example, in the chapter on methods of isolation in contagious diseases, a question which arises sooner or later in every household, I have advocated those measures which have the support of the best rational probability and statistical support.

Not only has the book been prepared in consultation with the recognized authorities on public health and preventive medicine, but every chapter has been submitted to the expert criticism of specialists upon the particular subject treated. My own

## INTRODUCTORY NOTE

ideas and theories I have advanced only in such passages as deal with the relation of the physician and of the citizen to the social and ethical phases of public health. To the large number of medical scientists, both public and private, whose generous aid and counsel have made my work possible, I gratefully acknowledge my debt. My thanks are due also for permission to reprint, to the *Delineator*, in which most of the chapters have appeared serially; to *Collier's Weekly*, and to the *Ladies' Home Journal*.

THE AUTHOR.

# CONTENTS

I. THE CHINESE PLAN PHYSICIAN . . . . .	1
II. IN TIME OF PEACE . . . . .	33
III. REPAIRING BETTINA . . . . .	61
IV. THE CORNER DRUG-STORE . . . . .	89
V. THE MAGIC LENS . . . . .	119
VI. THE RE-MADE LADY . . . . .	142
VII. THE RED PLACARD . . . . .	177
VIII. HOPE FOR THE HOPELESS . . . . .	201
IX. THE GOOD GRAY DOCTOR . . . . .	226
X. THE HOUSE THAT CAUGHT COLD . . . . .	258
XI. THE BESIEGED CITY . . . . .	280
XII. PLAIN TALK . . . . .	314



# THE HEALTH MASTER

## I

### THE CHINESE PLAN PHYSICIAN

**T**HE eleven-o'clock car was just leaving Monument Square when Mr. Thomas Clyde swung aboard with an ease and agility worthy of a younger and less portly man. Fortune favored him with an unoccupied seat, into which he dropped gratefully. Just in front of him sprawled a heavy-shouldered young man, apparently asleep. Mr. Clyde was unfavorably impressed both by his appearance and by the manner of his breathing, which was as excessive as it was unusual. As the car swung sharply around a curve the young man's body sagged at the waist, and lopped over toward the aisle. Before Mr. Clyde's restraining hand could close upon his shoulder, he had tumbled outward to the floor, and lay quiet, with upturned face. There was a stir through the car.

"The horrid drunken creature!" exclaimed a black-clad woman opposite Mr. Clyde. "Why do they allow such people on the cars?"

The conductor hurried forward, only to find his way blocked by a very tall, slender man who had

## THE HEALTH MASTER

quietly stepped, from a seat next the window, over an intervening messenger boy and the box he was carrying. The new arrival on the scene of action stooped over the prostrate figure. One glance apparently satisfied him. With a swift, sharp motion he slapped the inert man forcefully across the cheek. The sound of the impact was startlingly loud. The senseless head rolled over upon the left shoulder, only to be straightened out by another quick blow. A murmur of indignation and disgust hummed and passed, and the woman in black called upon the conductor to stop the assault. But Mr. Thomas Clyde, being a person of decision and action, was before the official. He caught the assailant's arm as it swung back again.

“Let him alone! What do you mean by beating a helpless man that way!”

“Do you know more about this affair than I do?” The crisp query was accompanied by a backward thrust of the tall man's elbow which broke Mr. Clyde's hold, and—smack! smack!—the swift double blow rocked the victim's head again. This time the man groaned. The car was in an uproar. Mr. Clyde instantly and effectively pinned the tall man's elbows from behind. Some one pulled the bell, and the brakes ground, throwing those forward who had pressed into the aisle. Against this pressure, Mr. Clyde, aided by the conductor,

## THE CHINESE PLAN PHYSICIAN

began dragging his man backward. The stranger was helpless to resist this grip; but as he was forced away he perpetrated a final atrocity. Shooting out one long leg, he caught the toe of his boot under the outstretched man's jawbone and jerked the chin back. This time, the object of the violence not only groaned, but opened his eyes.

"I'll have you in jail for that!" panted Mr. Clyde, his usually placid temper surging up.

Other passengers began to lift the victim.

"Drop him!" snapped the tall man, with such imperative decisiveness, that the helping hands involuntarily retracted. "Let him lie, you fools! Do you want to kill him?"

Misgivings beset and cooled Mr. Thomas Clyde. He had now reached the rear platform, still holding in his powerful and disabling grasp the unknown man, when he heard a voice from an automobile which had been halted by the abrupt stop of the car.

"Can I be of any help?"

"Dr. Magruder!" exclaimed Mr. Clyde, "come in here, will you, and look at a sick man?"

As the doctor stepped aboard, the captive with a violent wrench freed himself from Mr. Clyde's relaxing hold and dropped from the platform into the darkness. Dr. Magruder forced his way through the crowd, took one look at the patient,

## THE HEALTH MASTER

and, right and left, struck him powerfully across the cheeks time and again, until the leaden-lidded eyes opened again. There was a quick recourse to the physician's little satchel; then —

“All right,” said the doctor cheerfully. “He'll do now. But, my friend, with that heart of yours, you want to sign the pledge or make your will. It was touch and go with you that time.”

Waiting to hear no more, Mr. Thomas Clyde jumped from the rear step and set off at a rapid pace, looking about him as he ran. He had not gone a block when he saw, by the radiance of an electric light, a tall figure leaning against a tree in an attitude of nerveless dejection. The figure straightened up.

“Don't try to man-handle me again,” advised the man, “or you may meet with a disappointment.”

“I've come to apologize.”

“Very well,” returned the other coolly; “I appreciate it. Many a fool would n't go even so far.”

Mr. Clyde smiled. “I own to the soft impeachment. From what Dr. Magruder said I judge you saved that fellow from the hospital.”

“I judge I did — no thanks to you! You've a grip like a vise.”

“Yes; I keep in good training,” said the other pleasantly. “A man of my age has to, if he is to



## THE CHINESE PLAN PHYSICIAN

hold up his work." He looked concernedly at the stranger who had involuntarily lapsed against the tree again. "See here," he added, "I don't believe you're well."

"No; I don't believe I am," answered the tall man in uncompromising tones; "but I do believe that it is peculiarly my own affair whether I am or not."

"Nonsense! Man, your nerves are on the jump. You used yourself up on that chap in the street car. Come across to my club and take something to brace you up."

People usually found it hard to resist Mr. Clyde's quiet persuasiveness. The stranger, after a moment of consideration, smiled.

"Begin with a fight and end with a drink?" he asked. "That's a reversal of the usual process. If your cuisine runs to a cup of hot milk as late as this, I'd be glad to have it."

As they entered the club, Mr. Clyde turned to his guest.

"What name shall I register?"

The stranger hesitated. "Strong," he said finally.

"Dr. Strong?"

"Well — yes — Dr. Strong if you will."

"Of what place?"

"Any place — Calcutta, Paris, Mexico City,

## THE HEALTH MASTER

Philadelphia, Rio. I've tried 'em all. I'm a man without a country, as I am without a profession." He spoke with the unguarded bitterness of shaken nerves.

"Without a profession! But you said 'Doctor.'"

"A title is n't a profession," returned the guest shortly.

Turning that over in his mind, Mr. Clyde led the way to a quiet table in the corner of the dining-room, where he gave his order. Observing that his new acquaintance was *distract*, he swung into the easy conversational flow of a cultured man of the world, at the same time setting his keen judgment of men to work upon the other. There was much there to interest a close observer. The face indicated not much over thirty years; but there were harsh lines in the broad and thoughtful forehead, and the hair that waved away from it was irregularly blotched with gray. The eyes, very clear and liquid, were marred by an expression of restlessness and stress. The mouth was clear-cut, with an expression of rather sardonic humor. Altogether it was a face to remark and remember; keen, intellectual, humorous, and worn. Mr. Thomas Clyde decided that he liked the man.

"You've been a traveler, Doctor?" he asked.

"Yes. I've seen life in many countries — and death."

## THE CHINESE PLAN PHYSICIAN

“And traced the relations between them, I suppose?”

“Oh, I’ve flashed my little pin-point lantern at the Great Darkness in the fond hope of discovering something,” returned the other cynically.

“In a way, I’m interested in those matters,” continued Mr. Clyde. “They’ve organized a Public Health League here, and made me president of it. More from finance than fitness,” he added, humorously.

“Finance has its part, too,” said the other. “Give me millions enough and I’ll rid any city of its worst scourge, tuberculosis.”

“Then I wish to Heaven you had the millions to spend here in Worthington! We’re in a bad way. Two years ago we elected a reform administration. The Mayor put in a new Health Officer and we looked for results. We’ve had them — the wrong kind. The death rate from tuberculosis has gone up twenty-five per cent, and the number of cases nearly fifty per cent since he took office.”

“You don’t say so!” said the stranger, showing his first evidence of animation. “That’s good.”

Mr. Clyde stared. “You think so? Then you’ll undoubtedly be pleased to learn that other diseases are increasing almost at the same rate: measles, scarlet fever, and so on.”

“Fine!” said Dr. Strong.

## THE HEALTH MASTER

“And finally, our general mortality rate has gone up a full point. We propose to take some action regarding it.”

“Quite right. You certainly ought to.”

Something in his guest's tone made Mr. Clyde suspicious. “What action would you suggest, then?” he asked.

“A vote of confidence in your Health Officer.”

“You propose that we indorse the man who is responsible for a marked rise in our mortality figures?”

“Certainly.”

“In the name of all that's absurd, why?”

“Let me answer that by another question. If disease appears in your household, do you want your doctor to conceal it or check it?”

Mr. Clyde took that under advisement. “You mean that this city has been concealing its diseases, and that Dr. Merritt, our new Health Officer, is only making known a condition which has always existed?” he asked presently.

“Have n't you just told me so?”

“When did I tell you anything of the sort?”

The younger man smiled. “That's five questions in a row,” said he. “Time for an answer. You said that deaths from tuberculosis had increased twenty-five per cent since the new man came in.”

“Well?”

## THE CHINESE PLAN PHYSICIAN

“You’re wrong. Tuberculosis does n’t increase in sudden leaps. It is n’t an epidemic disease, rising and receding in waves. It’s endemic, a steady current.”

“But look at the figures. Figures don’t lie, do they?”

“Usually, in vital statistics,” was the imper-turbable reply. “In this case, probably not. That is, they don’t lie to me. I’m afraid they do to you.”

Mr. Clyde looked dubiously at the propounder of this curious suggestion and shook his head.

“Don’t get it?” queried Dr. Strong. “Perhaps you recall the saying of Thoreau — I think it the profoundest philosophical thought of the New World — that it takes two to tell the truth, one to speak and one to hear it.”

“You mean that we’ve misinterpreted the figures? Why, they’re as plain as two and two.”

“Truth lies behind figures, not in them,” said Dr. Strong. “Now, you’re worried because of a startling apparent swelling of the tuberculosis rate. When you find that sort of a sudden increase, it does n’t signify that there’s more tuberculosis. It signifies only that there’s more knowledge of tuberculosis. You’re getting the disease more honestly reported; that’s all. Dr. Merritt — did you say his name is? — has stirred up your physicians to obey the law which requires that all

## THE HEALTH MASTER

deaths be promptly and properly reported, and all new cases of certain communicable diseases, as well. Speaking as a doctor, I should say that, with the exception of lawyers, there is no profession which considers itself above the law so widely as the medical profession. Therefore, your Health Officer has done something rather unusual in bringing the doctors to a sense of their duty. As for reporting, you can't combat a disease until you know where it is established and whither it is spreading. So, I say, any health officer who succeeds in spurring up the medical profession, and in dragging the Great White Plague out of its lurking-places into the light of day ought to have a medal."

"What about the other diseases? Is the same true of them?"

"Not to the same extent. No man can tell when or why the epidemic diseases — scarlet fever, measles, whooping-cough, and diphtheria — come and go. By the way, what about your diphtheria death rate here?"

"That is the exception to the rule. The rate is decreasing."

Dr. Strong brought his hand down flat on the table with a force which made his cup jump in its saucer. "And your misnamed Public Health League proposes to take some action against the

## THE CHINESE PLAN PHYSICIAN

man who is shown, by every evidence you've suggested thus far, to be the right man in the right place!"

"How does the diphtheria rate show in his favor any more than the other death rates against him?"

"Because diphtheria is the one important disease which your medical officer can definitely control, and he seems to be doing it."

"The only important one? Surely smallpox is controllable?"

"Smallpox is the poisoned arrow of the fool-killer. It is controllable; but it is n't important, except to fools and anti-vaccination bigots."

Mr. Thomas Clyde softly rubbed his clean-shaven chin, a sign and token with him that his mind was hard at work.

"You're giving me a new view of a city in which I've lived for the first and last forty-five years of my life," he said presently. "Are you familiar with conditions here?"

"Never have been here before, and have no reason to suppose that I shall ever return. Traveling at night is too much for me, so I stopped over to have a look at a town which has been rather notorious among public health officials for years."

"Notorious!" repeated Mr. Clyde, his local pride up in arms.

"For falsifying its vital statistics. Your low

## THE HEALTH MASTER

mortality figures are a joke. Worthington has been more jeered at, criticized, and roasted by various medical conventions than any other city in the United States.”

“Why, I’ve never seen anything of that sort in the papers.”

Dr. Strong laughed. “Your newspapers print what you want to read; not what you don’t want to read. They follow the old adage, ‘What you don’t know won’t hurt you.’ It’s a poor principle in matters of hygiene.”

“So one might suppose,” returned the host dryly. “Still you can scarcely expect a newspaper to run down its own city. I’ve known business to suffer for a year from sensational reports of an epidemic.”

The other grunted. “If a pest of poisonous spiders suddenly bred and spread in Worthington, the newspapers would be full of it, and everybody would commend the printing of the facts as a necessary warning and safeguard. But when a pest of poisonous germs breeds and spreads, Business sets its finger to its lips and says, ‘Hush!’ and the newspapers obey. You’re a business man, I assume, Mr. Clyde? Frankly, I have n’t very much sympathy with the business point of view.”

He rose and pushed his chair back.

“Wait a moment,” said the other. “Sit down.



## THE CHINESE PLAN PHYSICIAN

I have something that may be of importance to suggest to you. It occurs to me that Worthington would be the better for having a man with your ideas as a citizen. Now, supposing the Public Health League should offer you —”

“I am not at present in medical practice,” broke in the other.

“Even at that, I was thinking that you would be of use as an advisory physician and scientific lookout.”

For a moment, the other’s face brightened, an indication which Mr. Clyde was quick to note. But instantly the expression of eagerness died out.

“Ten hours a day?” said Dr. Strong. “It could n’t be done properly in less time. And I’m a mere nervous wreck, bound for the scrap-heap.”

“Would you mind,” said Mr. Clyde very gently, “telling me what’s wrong? I’m not asking without a purpose.”

Dr. Strong held out his long arms before him. “I’m a surgeon without a right hand, and a bacteriologist without a left.” The sinewy and pale hands shook a little. “Neuritis,” he continued. “One of the diseases of which we doctors have the most fear and the least knowledge.”

“And with the loss of your occupation, general nervous collapse?” asked Mr. Clyde. Being himself a worker who put his heart into his work, he

## THE HEALTH MASTER

could guess the sterile hopelessness of spirit of the man banned from a chosen activity.

Dr. Strong nodded. "I may still be fit for the lecture platform as a dispenser of other men's knowledge. Or perhaps I'll end up as medical watchdog to some rich man who can afford that kind of pet. Pleasing prospect, is n't it, for a man who once thought himself of use in the world?"

"Good idea," said Mr. Clyde quietly. "Will you try the position with my family?"

The other stared in silence at his questioner.

"Just consider my situation for a moment. As you know, I'm a layman, interested in, but rather ignorant of, medical subjects. As wealth goes in a city of one hundred and fifty thousand population, I'm a rich man. At any rate, I can afford a considerable outlay to guard against sickness. In the last five years I suppose disease has cost my household ten thousand dollars in money, and has cost me, in worry and consequent incapacity for work, ten times that amount. Even at a large salary you would doubtless prove an economy. Come, what do you say?"

"You know absolutely nothing of me," suggested the other.

"I know that you are a man of quick and correct judgment, for I saw you in action." The other smiled. "You are, for reasons which are your own,

## THE CHINESE PLAN PHYSICIAN

not very expansive as to your past professional career. I'm content with that attitude of yours, and I'm quite satisfied to base my offer on what I have been able to judge from your manner and talk. Without boasting, I may say that I have built up a great manufacturing plant largely on my judgment of men. I think I need you in my business of raising a family."

"How much of a family?"

"Five children, their mother and their grandmother. I may warn you at once that you'll have a jealous rival in Grandma. She's the household guardian, and pretty 'sot' in her ideas. But the principal thing is for you to judge me as I've judged you, and determine whether we could work out the plan together."

Dr. Strong set his chin in one thin, cupped hand and gazed considerably upon the profferer of this strange suggestion. He saw a strong-built, clear-skinned man, whose physical aspect did not suggest the forty-five years to which he had owned. Mr. Clyde recommended himself at first sight by a smooth-voiced ease of manner, and that unostentatious but careful fitness of apparel which is, despite wise apothegms to the contrary, so often an index of character. Under the easy charm of address, there was unobtrusively evident a quick intelligence, a stalwart self-respect, and a powerful will.

## THE HEALTH MASTER

Yet, the doctor noted, this man had been both ready and fair in yielding his judgment, under the suggestion of a new point of view. Evidently he could take orders as well as give them.

“Well,” said Mr. Clyde, “have you appraised me?”

The weary eyes of the other twinkled a little. “Physically you disclose some matters plainly enough, if one wishes to show off in the Sherlock Holmes manner. For instance, you’ve recently been in the tropics; your eyesight is better than your hearing, you drink lightly if at all, and don’t use tobacco in any form; you’ve taken up athletics — handball principally — in recent years, as the result of a bad scare you got from a threatened paralytic attack; and your only serious illness since then has been typhoid fever.”

Mr. Clyde laughed outright. “If you had started our acquaintance that way,” he said, “I’d have thought you a fortune-teller. Part of it I can follow. You noticed that I kept my left ear turned, of course; and the fact that my nose shows no eyeglass marks would vouch for my eyesight. Did you judge me a non-smoker because I forgot to offer you a cigar — which deficiency I’ll gladly make up now, if it is n’t too late.”

“Partly that — no, thank you. I’m not allowed to smoke — but principally because I noticed you

## THE CHINESE PLAN PHYSICIAN

disliked the odor of my hot milk. It is offensive, but so faint that no man without a very keen sense of smell would perceive it across a table; no tobacco-user preserves his sense of smell to any such degree of delicacy. As for the drink, I judged that from your eyes and general fitness.”

“And the handball, of course, from my ‘cushioned’ palms.”

“Obviously. A man at the heart of a great business does n’t take up violent indoor exercise without some special reason. Such a reason I saw on the middle finger of your left hand.”

Holding up the telltale member, Mr. Clyde disclosed a small dark area at the side of the first joint.

“Leaky fountain-pen,” he remarked.

“As you are right-handed naturally, but write with your left hand, it’s clear that you’ve had an attack of writer’s paralysis —”

“Five years ago,” put in Mr. Clyde.

“And that your doctor made good use of the salutary scare it gave you, to get you to take up regular exercise.”

“And, incidentally, to cut out my moderate, occasional cocktail. Now, as to the tropics and the typhoid?”

“The latter is a guess; the former a certainty. Under your somewhat sparse long hair in front

## THE HEALTH MASTER

there is an outcropping of very fine hairs. Some special cause exists for that new growth. The most likely cause, at your age, is typhoid. As you've kept in good training, it is n't likely that you'd have had any other serious ailment recently. On that I took a chance. The small scars at the back of your ears could be nothing but the marks of that little pest of the tropics, the *bête rouge*. I've had him dug out of my skin and I know something of him."

"Right on every count," declared Mr. Clyde. "You've given me cumulative proof of your value to me. I'll tell you. Forget formalities. Let me 'phone for a cab; we'll go to your hotel, get your things, and you come back with me for the night. In the morning you can look the ground over, and decide, with the human documents before you, whether you'll undertake the campaign."

The younger man smiled a very pleasant and winning smile. "You go fast," said he. "And as in all fast motion, you create a current in your direction. Certainly, if I'm to consider your remarkable plan I'd best see the whole family. But there's one probable and perhaps insurmountable obstacle. Who is your physician?"

"Have n't such a thing in the house, at present," said Mr. Clyde lightly. Then, in a graver tone, "Our old family physician died six months ago.

## THE CHINESE PLAN PHYSICIAN

He knew us all inside and out as a man knows a familiar book.”

“A difficult loss to replace. Knowledge of your patient is half the battle in medicine. You’ve had no one since?”

“Yes. Six weeks ago, my third boy, Charley, showed signs of fever and we called a distant cousin of mine who has a large practice. He felt quite sure from the first that it was diphtheria; but he so managed matters that we had no trouble with the officials. In fact, he did n’t report it at all, though I believe it was a very light case of the disease.”

Dr. Strong’s eyes narrowed. “At the outset, I’ll give you two bits of advice, gratis, Mr. Clyde. First, don’t ever call your doctor-cousin again. He’s an anarchist.”

“Just what do you mean by that?”

“It’s plain enough, is n’t it? Anarchist, I said: a man who does n’t believe in law when it contravenes his convenience.”

Mr. Clyde rubbed his chin again. “Hum,” he remarked. “Well! the second gift of advice?”

“That you either respect the law yourself or resign the presidency of the Public Health League.”

A distinct spot of red appeared on each of the elder man’s smooth cheeks. “Are you trying to provoke me to a quarrel?” he asked brusquely.

## THE HEALTH MASTER

Then his expression mollified. "Or are you testing me?"

"Neither. I'm giving you my best and most honest advice. If you expect me to do as your substitute physician did, to guard your household in violation of the law which tries to protect the whole public equally, you've got the wrong man, and your boasted judgment has gone askew," was the steady reply.

Mr. Clyde turned and left the room. When he returned his hand was outstretched.

"I've taken three swallows of cold air, and sent for a cab," he said. "Shake hands. I think you and I will be friends. Only — train me a little gently at the outset. You'll come with me?"

"Yes," said Dr. Strong, and the two men shook hands.

During the drive Mr. Clyde expounded the virtues and characteristics of his native city to his new acquaintance, who was an excellent listener. Long afterward he found Dr. Strong acting on remembered and shrewdly analyzed information given in that first long talk. When they reached the big, rambling, many-windowed house which afforded the growing Clyde family opportunity to grow, the head of the household took his guest to an apartment in one of the wings.

"These two rooms are yours," he said. "I hope



## THE CHINESE PLAN PHYSICIAN

you'll be like Coleridge who came to visit with one satchel and stayed five years."

"That remains to be seen to-morrow," said Dr. Strong. "By the way, as I usually read myself to sleep, you might leave me some of your local health reports. Thus I can be looking the ground over."

"All I've got you'll find on the shelf over the desk. Good-night!"

Being of that type of man who does his thinking before and not after a decision, Mr. Thomas Clyde arose in the morning with an untroubled mind as to his new venture in household economics. Voices from the library attracted him thither, as he came downstairs, and, entering, he beheld his guest hedged in a corner by the grandmother of the Clyde household.

"Don't tell me, young man," the old lady was saying, in her clear, determined voice. "You've not slept well for ages! I know that kind of an eye."

"Mrs. Sharpless has been diagnosing my case, Mr. Clyde," called the guest, with a rather wry smile.

"You stay here for a while," said she vigorously, "and I'll cocker you up. I don't believe you even eat properly. Do you?"

"Maybe not," admitted the young man. "We doctors are sometimes less wise for ourselves than for others."

## THE HEALTH MASTER

“Oh! So you’re a doctor?” asked the grandmother with a shrewd, estimating glance.

“Dr. Strong is, I hope, going to stay with us awhile,” explained her son-in-law.

“Good!” said Mrs. Sharpless. “And I’ll take care of him.”

“It’s a strong inducement,” said Dr. Strong gracefully. “But I want a little more material on which to base a decision.”

“Between us Grandma and I ought to be able to answer any questions,” said Mr. Clyde.

“About sickness, then, in the family. I’ve already introduced myself to Mrs. Clyde and questioned her; but her information is n’t definite.”

“Myra seldom is,” observed Mr. Clyde. “It’s part of her charm. But Grandma Sharpless has been keeping a daybook for years. Everything that’s ever happened, from the cat’s fits to the dress-maker’s misfits, is in that series. I’ve always thought it might come in handy sometime.”

“Just the thing!” said Dr. Strong heartily. “Will you bring it, Mrs. Sharpless? I hope you’ve included your comment on events as well as the events themselves.”

“My opinions are generally pronounced enough so that I can remember ’em, young man,” returned Mrs. Sharpless, as she departed for the desired volumes.

## THE CHINESE PLAN PHYSICIAN

“That last remark of yours sounded a little like making fun of Grandma,” suggested Mr. Clyde, as the door closed after her.

“Far from it,” retorted Dr. Strong quickly. “Can’t you see that she’s a born diagnostician? She’s got the sixth sense sticking out all over her. Women more often have it than men. When a doctor has it, and sometimes when he’s only able to counterfeit it, he becomes great and famous.”

“Now that you speak of it, I remember my wife’s saying that when she was a girl and lived in the country, her mother was always being sent for in cases of illness.”

Dr. Strong nodded. “Heretical though it is to say so, I would rather have the diagnosis of such a woman, in an obscure case, than of many a doctor. She learns in the school of experience.”

Here, Mrs. Sharpless returned, carrying several diaries.

“These go five years back,” said she. “You’ll find ’em pretty complete. We’ve had our fair share of trouble; measles, whooping-cough, — I thought Betsy was going to bark her poor little head off, — mumps, and chicken-pox. I nursed ’em through, myself.”

“All of them?”

“All of ’em did n’t have all the things because Tom Clyde sent the rest away when one of ’em

## THE HEALTH MASTER

came down. All nonsense, I say. Better let 'em get it while they're young, and have done with it."

"One of the worst of the old superstitions," said Dr. Strong quietly.

"Don't tell me, young man! Doctor or no doctor, you can't teach me about children's diseases. There is n't any of those measly and mumpy ones that I'm afraid of. Bobs *did* scare me, though, with that queer attack of his."

"Bobs," explained Mr. Clyde, "is Robin, one of the eight-year-old twins."

"Tell me about the attack."

"When *was* it?" said the grandmother, running over the leaves of a selected diary. "Oh, here it is. Last March. It was short and sharp. Only lasted three days; but the child had a dreadful fever and pretty bad cramps."

"Anything else?"

"Why, yes; though that idiot of a cousin of Tom's snubbed me when I told him about it. The boy seemed kind of numb and slow with his hands for some time after."

"And now?" So sharp came the question that Mr. Clyde glanced at the speaker, not without apprehension.

"Nothing left of it that I can see."

"What had you in mind?" asked Mr. Clyde of the doctor, curiously.

## THE CHINESE PLAN PHYSICIAN

“Speaking technically, anterior poliomyelitis.”

Grandma Sharpless laughed comfortably. “I’ve noticed that a very long name like that usually means a sore toe or a pimple behind your ear. It’s the short names that bring the undertaker.”

“Shrewdly said, but exception noted,” said Dr. Strong.

“As for Bobs, I remember two cases I saw at Clinton years ago, like that attack of his. One of ’em never walked afterward, and the other has a shriveled hand to this day.”

Dr. Strong nodded. “To come down nearer to English, that’s infantile paralysis, one of the mysteries of medicine. I’ll tell you some things about it some day. Your Bobs had a narrow escape.”

“You’re sure it is an escape?” asked the father anxiously.

“If Mrs. Sharpless is satisfied that there’s no trace left, I am.”

“Come in to breakfast,” said Mrs. Clyde, entering the room with a child attached to either hand. She was a tall, fair woman with the charm of fresh coloring and regular features, large, intelligent eyes, and a somewhat restless vigor and vitality. That her husband and children adored her was obvious. One had to look twice to perceive that she was over thirty; and even a careful estimate did not suggest her real age of thirty-seven.

## THE HEALTH MASTER

During the introductory meal, Dr. Strong talked mostly to her, but he kept watching the children. And when it was over, he went to his study and made an inventory, in the order of age.

- GRANDMA                    *Probably 70; sound and firm as a good apple; ought to live to be 90. Medical demands, none.*
- SHARPLESS;
- MR. CLYDE;                *45; sturdy, restrained, active, phlegmatic: Tends to over-concentration; his own best physician.*
- MRS. CLYDE;              *35; possibly more. Quick-witted, nervously active; eager, perhaps a little greedy of enjoyment. Somewhat intemperate; probably in eating, possibly in the use of tea or candy. An invariably loving mother; not invariably a wise one.*
- MAYNARD,                 *14 years old; rangy, good-tempered, intelligent otherwise*  
"MANNY"  
CLYDE;                    *boy with a good physical equipment. (Note: watch his eyes.)*
- ROBIN, *alias*              *8-year old twins; Bobs, quick and flashing like Bobs and*  
                                 *his mother; Julia, demure, thoughtful, a little*  
JULIA (*mysteriously*) JUN- *lethargic, and with much of her father's win-*  
KUM;                        *ning quality of friendliness. (Note: test Bobs for reflexes. Watch Julia's habits of play.)*
- CHARLES;                 *Aged 7; strong rough-and-tumble urchin, the particular pet of his grandmother. (Note: watch his hand motions.)*
- BETTINA, *alias*            *4 years old; a Duck [here the human side of variously BET-*  
SY, TOOTS,                *the doctor broke through], though a little*  
TWINKLES,                *spoiled by her father. (Note: a mouth-breather; and the*  
                                 *the first case to be considered.)*  
CHERUB;

## THE CHINESE PLAN PHYSICIAN

ADDENDUM; *Various servants, not yet identified or studied; but none the less members of our household community.*

This catalogue Dr. Strong put away, with Grandma Sharpless's day books, for further notation and amplification. Then he made three visits: one to the Health Bureau, one to the Water Department, and one to the City Engineer's office, where he spent much time over sundry maps. It was close upon dinner-time when he returned, and immediately looked up Mr. Clyde.

"Well?" said that gentleman.

"Assuming that I accept your offer it should be understood that I'm only a guardian, not a physician."

"Meaning —"

"That I shall expect, in emergency, to call in such physicians or others as I consider best equipped for the particular task."

"Very well. But why that phrase 'or others'?"

"I've suggested before that I am a heretic. In certain instances I might want an osteopath, or, if I were dealing with a sick soul causing a sick body, I might even send for a Christian Scientist."

"You have a refreshingly catholic breadth of view."

"I'm trying to map out for you, a rich man, as good treatment as a very poor man would have in

## THE HEALTH MASTER

a hospital — that is, the best technical advice for every hygienic emergency that may arise — plus some few extensions of my own. Now we come to what is likely to prove the stumbling-block.”

“Set it up.”

“If I’m to take this job, I must be the autocrat, in so far as my own department is concerned. As you know, a city health official’s powers are arbitrary. He can burn your house down; he can imprison you; he can establish a military régime; he can override or undo the laws which control the ordinary procedure of life. Hygienic law, like martial law, supersedes rights in crises. You are asking me to act as health officer of your house. If I’m to do my work, I must have full sway, and I shall expect you to see that every member of your household obeys my orders — except,” he added, with a twinkle, “Grandma Sharpless. I expect she’s too old to take orders from any one. Diplomacy must be my agent with her.”

Mr. Clyde pondered. “That’s a pretty wide authority you’re asking.”

“Yes, but I shall use it only in extreme cases. I shall deal extensively in advice and suggestion, which you may take or leave as you choose. But an order will mean a life or death matter.”

“Agreed. Now, as to terms —”

“Let the terms go, until we see how much I can



## THE CHINESE PLAN PHYSICIAN

save you. Meantime, don't overestimate what I undertake to do. Suppose you just run through the roster of what you consider the danger points, and I'll tell you how far I can promise anything."

"First, then, tuberculosis, of course."

"Practical immunity from that, as long as you maintain your present standards of life."

"Typhoid fever. As I told you, we've had one visitation."

"There's no reason why you should ever have another if the children will take ordinary precautions."

"Diphtheria?"

"We can't guarantee the youngsters against getting it, though we can do something to protect them. And if they do get it, we can be pretty certain of pulling them through."

"Scarlet fever and measles?"

"Why not add whooping-cough and influenza? The former kills as many people as either scarlet fever or measles, and the latter twice as many. They're all in the same category; medical science is pretty near helpless against their onset. You and your family may be as rigidly careful as they will; if the family next door, or a family at the farthest end of the town, is careless, we're as likely as not to suffer for their sins. All that I can promise, then, is hope against the occurrence of these

## THE HEALTH MASTER

diseases, and the constant watchfulness, when they come, which they call for but don't always get."

"Cancer?"

"Eternal vigilance, again; so that, if it does come, we may discover it in time."

"Let me see," mused Mr. Clyde; "what else is there? Oh — nervous and functional disorders."

"Functional disorders mean, usually, either a bad start, or the heritage of some disease like scarlet fever or grippe, or excess or carelessness in living. I think your household is free from them; and it should remain free. As for nervous ailments, they commonly mean lack of self-discipline. It may be overindulgence in work" — he glanced down at his right hand — "or it may be overindulgence in play." His glance wandered significantly to the doorway, through which the voice of Mrs. Clyde could be heard. "By the way, you've left out the greatest destroyer of all — perhaps because you're beyond the danger point."

"Tuberculosis is the greatest destroyer, isn't it?"

"Not numerically. It is beaten out by the death record of intestinal poisoning in the very young. Your flock has run the gamut and come through with undiminished vitality. Two of them, however, are running life's race under a handicap" — the father's eyelids went up — "which I'll take up

## THE CHINESE PLAN PHYSICIAN

shortly, when I've fully determined the causes. They can be repaired, one readily, the other in time. Finally, I hope to be able to teach them the gospel of the sound, clean mind in the sound, clean body. In a desert I might guarantee immunity from most of the ills that flesh is heir to. Amid the complexities of our civilization, disease and death are largely social; there is no telling from what friend the poison may come. No man can safeguard his house. The most he can hope for is a measure of protection. I can offer you nothing more than that, under our compact."

"That is enough," returned Mr. Clyde. He took from his inner pocket a folded paper, which he handed over to the young man. "There's the contract, duly signed. Come in, Grandma."

Mrs. Sharpless, entering the door, stopped on seeing the two men.

"Business, Tom?" she asked.

"Business that you're interested in," said her son-in-law, and briefly outlined his plan.

Grandma Sharpless shook a wise gray head. "I'm glad you're going to stay, young man," said she. "You need looking after. But as for the scheme, I don't hold much with these new-fangled notions."

"Perhaps it is n't as new-fangled as you suppose," returned the head of the household. "I've

## THE HEALTH MASTER

just given Dr. Strong a contract, and where do you suppose I got it?"

"That lawyer man of yours, probably," said Mrs. Sharpless.

"Well, he looked it over and made sure it was sound in American law. But essentially it's a copy of a medical contract in force before Hippocrates ever rolled a pill. It's the old logical Chinese form, whereby the doctor's duty is prescribed as warding off sickness, not curing it. Is that old-fashioned enough for you, grandma?"

"Chinese! My land!" said the old lady. "What do they know about sickness?"

"They know the one most important fact in all medical practice, ma'am," said Dr. Strong, "that the time for locking the stable door is before the horse is stolen, and that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure."

## II

### IN TIME OF PEACE

How is the Chinese plan working?" asked Mr. Thomas Clyde, stretching himself on the lounge in Dr. Strong's study.

One week before, the doctor had been officially installed, on the Oriental principle of guarding the Clyde household against intruding sickness. In that time he had asked few questions. But Mr. Clyde, himself a close observer, noted the newcomer's quietly keen observation of the children, and sometimes of Mrs. Clyde, as they met at meal-time. He had remarked, too, that the nervous tension of the man was relaxing; and guessed that he had found, in his new and unique employment, something of that panacea of the troubled soul, congenial work. Now, having come to Dr. Strong's wing of the house by request, he smilingly put his question, and was as smilingly answered.

"Your Chinese physician has been making what the Chinese call a 'go-look-see.' In other but less English terms, a reconnaissance."

"In what department?"

## THE HEALTH MASTER

“Earth, air, and water.” The other waved an inclusive hand.

“Any results?”

“Oh, all kinds. Preliminary report now ready. I’d like to make it a sort of family conference.”

“Good idea! I’ll send for Mrs. Clyde and Grandma Sharpless.”

“Children out of town?” inquired Dr. Strong suggestively.

“Of course not. Oh, I see. You want us all. Servants, too?”

“The cook certainly. She should be very important to our council of war. Perhaps we might leave the rest till later.”

They gathered in the spacious study; and Grandma Sharpless glanced round approvingly.

“It’s like family prayers,” she commented.

“Concerted effort *is* a sort of prayer, if it’s honest,” said Dr. Strong gravely. “I’ve never had much of an opinion of the man who gets up in meeting to beg the Lord for sound health for himself and family and then goes home and sleeps with all his windows closed.”

“There are no closed windows in this house,” said Grandma Sharpless emphatically. “I see to that, having been brought up on fresh air myself.”

“You show it,” returned the doctor pleasantly.

## IN TIME OF PEACE

“And I’ve noticed that this house breathes deep at night, through plenty of open windows. So I can save my own breath on that topic. Just now I want to talk milk.”

“All our milk comes from my farm,” said the head of the family. “Cows are my hobby. You ought to see the place, Strong; it’s only ten miles out.”

“I have seen the place.”

“What do you think of it?”

“I think you’d better get your milk somewhere else for a while.”

“Why, Dr. Strong!” protested Mrs. Clyde. “There is n’t a woman among my friends who does n’t envy me our cream. And the milk keeps sweet — oh, for days, does n’t it, Katie?”

“Yes’m,” replied the cook. “Three days, or even four, in the ice-box.”

“Does n’t that show it’s pure?” asked Mrs. Clyde triumphantly.

Dr. Strong shook his head. “Hardly proof,” he said. “Really clean milk will keep much longer. I have drunk milk from the Rochester municipal supply that was thirteen days old, and as sweet as possible. And that was in a hot August.”

“Thirteen days old! I’d be ashamed to tell it!” declared Grandma Sharpless, with so much asperity that there was a general laugh, in which the doctor joined.

## THE HEALTH MASTER

“I should n’t care to try it with your milk. It is rich, but it is n’t by any means pure. Eternal vigilance is the price of good milk. I don’t suppose you inspect your farm once a month, do you, Mr. Clyde?”

“No; I leave that to the farmer. He’s an intelligent fellow. What’s wrong?”

“Scientifically speaking, from 300,000 to 500,000 bacteria per cubic centimeter.”

“Do we drink all those things when we have a glass of milk, Dr. Strong?” inquired “Manny” Clyde, the oldest boy.

“Four or five times that many for every teaspoonful,” said the doctor. “But it is n’t as bad as it sounds, Manny. One hundred thousand is considered a fairly safe allowance, though *very* good milk — the kind I drank when it was thirteen days old — may contain only two or three thousand. When the count runs up to half a million or so, it shows that some kind of impurity is getting in. The bacteria in your milk may not be disease germs at all; they may all be quite harmless varieties. But sooner or later, if dirt gets into milk, dangerous germs will get in with it. The high count is a good danger signal.”

“If Bliss, the farmer, has been allowing dirt to get into the milk, he’ll find himself out of a place,” said Mr. Clyde decisively.



## IN TIME OF PEACE

“Don’t be too hard on him,” advised the doctor. “His principal fault is that he’s getting the milk dirty trying to keep it clean. He is washing his cans with water from an open well near the barnyard. The water in the well is badly contaminated from surface drainage. That would account for the high number of bacteria; that and careless milking.”

“And on that account you advise me to give up the milk?” asked Mr. Clyde.

“Only temporarily. There are other more immediate considerations. For one thing, there are both diphtheria and typhoid near by, and the people on the farm are in contact with them. That’s dangerous. You see, milk under favorable conditions is one of the best cultures for germs that is known. They flourish and multiply in it past belief. The merest touch of contamination may spread through a whole supply, like fire through flax. One more thing: one of your cows, I fear, is tuberculous.”

“We might pasteurize, I suppose,” suggested Mrs. Clyde anxiously.

Dr. Strong returned a decisive negative. “Pasteurized milk is better than poisoned milk,” he said; “but it’s a lot worse than good raw milk. Pasteurizing simply means the semi-cooking of all the varieties of germs, good and bad. In the process of cooking, some of the nutritive quality is

## THE HEALTH MASTER

lost. To be sure, it kills the bad germs, but it also kills the good ones.”

“Do you mean that some of the germs are actually useful?” asked Mrs. Clyde.

“Very useful, in certain rôles. For example, the lactic acid bacteria would be unpopular with you, Mrs. Clyde, because they are responsible for the souring of milk. But they also perform a protective work. They do their best to destroy any bacilli of disease which may invade their liquid home. Now, when you pasteurize, you kill all these millions of defenders; and any hostile germs that come along afterward and get into the milk, through dust or other mediums, can take possession and multiply without hindrance. Therefore pasteurized milk ought to be guarded with extra care after the process, which it seldom is. I once visited a large pasteurizing plant which made great boasts of its purity of product, and saw flies coming in from garbage pail and manure heap to contaminate the milk in the vats; milk helpless to protect itself, because all its army of defense had been boiled to death.”

“If we are allowed neither to use our farm milk raw nor to pasteurize it, what shall we do with it?” inquired Mr. Clyde.

“Full directions are in there,” answered Dr. Strong, pointing to an envelope on his desk. “If

## IN TIME OF PEACE

you'll look over what I've written, and instruct your farmer to follow it out, you'll have milk that is reasonably good. I'll go further than that; it will be even good enough to give to the babies of the tenements, if you should have any left over."

Mr. Thomas Clyde proceeded to rub his chin, with some degree of concentration, whereby Dr. Strong knew that his hint had struck in.

"Meantime," said Mrs. Clyde, with a trace of sarcasm, "do you expect us to live on condensed milk?"

"Not at all; on certified milk."

"What's that mean?" asked Miss Julia, who had a thirst for information.

"What's a certificate, Junkum?" retorted the doctor.

"That's what I get when I pass my examinations."

"Right! Well, milk coming from a farm that passes all its examinations gets a certificate from the Medical Society, which keeps a pretty constant watch over it. The society sees that all the cattle are tested for tuberculosis once in so often; that the cows are brushed off before milking; that the milking is done through a cloth, through which no dirt or dust can pass, into a can that has been cleaned by steam — not by contaminated water — so that no germs will remain alive in it; then cooled and

## THE HEALTH MASTER

sealed up and delivered. From the time the milk leaves the cow until it comes on your table, it has n't touched anything that is n't germ-proof. That is the system I have outlined in the paper for your farmer."

"It sounds expensive," commented Mrs. Clyde.

"Yes; that is the drawback. Certified milk costs from fifteen to twenty cents a quart. But when you consider that nearly half the dead babies were poisoned by bad milk it does n't seem so expensive, does it?"

"All very well for us," said Mr. Clyde thoughtfully. "We can afford it. But how about the thousands who can't?"

"There's the pity of it. Theoretically every city should maintain a milk standard up to the requirements of the medical certification, and allow no milk to be sold which falls short of that. It's feasible, and it could be done at a moderate price if we could educate the farmer to it. Copenhagen's milk supply is as good as the best certified milk in this country, because the great Danish Milk Company coöperates with the farmer, and does n't try to make huge profits; and its product sells under five cents a quart. But, to answer your question, Mr. Clyde: even a family of very moderate means could afford to take enough certified milk for the baby, and it would pay in doctor's bills saved. Older

## IN TIME OF PEACE

children and grown-ups are n't so much affected by milk."

"I'll go out to the farm to-morrow," said Mr. Clyde. "What's next?"

"Water, Mr. Clyde. I've found out where you got your typhoid, last summer."

"Pooh! I could have told you that," said Mrs. Sharpless. "There was sewer-gas in the house. It smelled to heaven the day before he was taken down."

"Is n't it curious how our belief in ghosts sticks to us!" commented the doctor, chuckling, — "malaria rising from swamps; typhoid and diphtheria rising in sewer-gas; sheeted specters rising from country graveyards — all in the same category."

Grandma Sharpless pushed her spectacles up on her forehead, a signal of battle with her. "Do you mean to tell me, young man, that there's no harm in sewer-gas?"

"Far from it! There's harm enough in sewer-gas, but no germs. The harm is that the gas reduces vitality, and makes one more liable to disease attack. It's just as true of coal-gas as of sewer-gas, and more true of ordinary illuminating gas than either. I'd much rather have bad plumbing in the house than even a small leak in a gas-pipe. No, Mrs. Sharpless, if you waited all day at the mouth of a sewer, you'd never catch a germ from the gas.

## THE HEALTH MASTER

Moreover, typhoid does n't develop under ten days, so your odorous outbreak of the day before could have had nothing to do with Mr. Clyde's illness."

"Perhaps you'll give us *your* theory," said the old lady, with an elaboration of politeness which plainly meant, "And whatever it is, I don't propose to believe it."

"Not mine, but the City Water Commissioner's. Mr. Clyde's case was one of about eighty, all within a few weeks of each other. They were all due to the criminal negligence of a city official who permitted the river supply, which is n't fit to drink and is used only for fire pressure, to flood into the mains carrying the drinking supply."

"Then why did n't the whole city get typhoid?" asked Mr. Clyde.

"Because only a part of the system was flooded by the river water. The problem of the city's experts was to find out what part was being contaminated with this dilute sewage. When the typhoid began to appear, the Health Department, knowing the Cypress supply to be pure, suspected milk. Not until a score of cases, showing a distribution distinct from any milk supply, had appeared, was suspicion directed to the water supply. Then the officials of the Water Department and Health Department tried a very simple but highly ingenious test. They dumped a lot of salt into the intake of the

## IN TIME OF PEACE

river supply, and tested hydrant after hydrant of the reservoir supply, until they had a complete outline of the mixed waters. From that it was easy to ascertain the point of mixture, and stop it."

"Our river water is always bad, is n't it?" said Mr. Clyde. "Last summer I had to keep Charley away from swimming-school because the tank is filled from the river, and two children got typhoid from swallowing some of it."

"All foolishness, I say," announced the grandmother. "Better let 'em learn to swim."

"Can't you swim at all?" asked Dr. Strong, turning to the seven-year-old.

"I went five strokes once," said Charley.

"Hum-m-m! Any other swimming-school near by?"

"No."

"And are the children about water at all?" Dr. Strong asked the mother.

"Well; there are the canal and the river both near us, you know."

"Then it comes down to this," said the doctor. "The liability of typhoid from what water Charley would swallow in the tank is n't very great. And if he should get it, the chances are we could pull him through. With the best care, there should be only one chance in fifty of a fatal result. But if Charley falls in the canal and, not knowing how to swim,

## THE HEALTH MASTER

is drowned, why, that's the end of it. Medical science is no good there. Of two dangers choose the lesser. Better let him go on with the swimming, Mrs. Clyde."

"Well!" said Grandma Sharpless, "I — I — I — swanny!" This was extreme profanity for her. "Young man, I'm glad to see for once that you've got sense as well as science!"

"Do you consider the Cypress supply always safe to drink? Several times it has occurred to me to outfit the house with filters," said Mr. Clyde.

"No need, so long as the present Water Department is in office," returned Dr. Strong. "I might almost add, no use anyway."

"Is n't filtered water good?" asked Manny. "They have it at the gymnasium."

"No house filter is absolutely sure. There's just one way to get a guaranteeable water: distill it. But I think you can safely use the city supply."

"What next, the water problem being cleared up?" asked Mr. Clyde.

"By no means cleared up. Assuming that you are reasonably safeguarded at home, you're just as likely — yes, even more likely — to pick up typhoid somewhere else."

"Why more likely?"

"For some mysterious reason a man accustomed to a good water supply is the easiest victim to a bad.



## IN TIME OF PEACE

Pittsburg, for many years the most notorious of American cities for filthy drinking, is a case in point. Some one pointed out that when Pittsburg was prosperous, and wages high, the typhoid rate went up; and when times were hard, it went down. Dr. Matson, of the Health Bureau, cleared up that point, by showing that the increase in Pittsburg's favorite disease was mainly among the newcomers who flocked to the city when the mills were running full time, to fill the demand for labor. An old resident might escape, a new one might hardly hope to. Dr. Matson made the interesting suggestion that perhaps those who drank the diluted sewage — for that is what the river water was — right along, came, in time, to develop a sort of immunity; whereas the newcomer was defenseless before the bacilli."

"Then a man, in traveling, ought to know the water supply of every city he goes to. How is he to find out?"

"In your case, Mr. Clyde, he's to find out from his Chinese doctor," said the other smiling. "I'm collecting data from state and city health boards, on that and other points. Air will now come in for its share of attention."

Young Manny Clyde grinned. "What's the use, Dr. Strong?" he said. "Nothing to breathe but air, you know."

## THE HEALTH MASTER

“True enough, youngster; but you can pick your air to some extent, so it’s worth while to know where it’s good and where it’s bad. Take Chicago, for instance. It has a very high pneumonia rate, and no wonder! The air there is a whirling mass of soot. After breathing that stuff a while, the lungs lose something of their power to resist, and the pneumococcus bacillus — that’s the little fellow that brings pneumonia and is always hanging about, looking for an opening in unprotected breathing apparatus — gets in his deadly work. Somewhere I’ve seen it stated that one railroad alone which runs through Chicago deposits more than a ton of cinders per year on every acre of ground bordering on its track. Now, no man can breathe that kind of an atmosphere and not feel the evil effects. Pittsburg is as bad, and Cincinnati and Cleveland are n’t much better. We save on hard coal and smoke-consumers, and lose in disease and human life, in our soft-coal cities. When I go to any of them I pick the topmost room in the highest hotel I can find, and thus get above the worst of it.”

“Don’t tell me that New York is unfit to breathe in!” said Mrs. Clyde, with a woman’s love for the metropolis.

“Thus far it’s pretty clean. The worst thing about New York is that they dry-sweep their streets and throw all the dust there is right in your face. The

## IN TIME OF PEACE

next worst is the subway. When analysis was made of the tube's air, the experimenters were surprised to find very few germs. But they were shocked to find the atmosphere full of tiny splinters of steel. It's even worse to breathe steel than to breathe coal."

"Any railroad track must be bad, then," said Mr. Clyde.

"Not necessarily. A steam railroad track runs mostly in the open, and that great cleaner, the wind, takes care of most of the trouble it stirs up. By the way, the cheaper you travel, the better you travel."

"That sounds like one of those maxims of the many that only the few believe," remarked Mrs. Clyde.

"You won't practice it, but you can safely believe it," retorted the doctor. "The atmosphere in a day coach is always better than in a parlor car, because there's an occasional direct draft through. As for a sleeping-car, — well, I never get into one without thinking of the definition in 'Life's' dictionary: 'Sleeping-Car — An invention for the purpose of transporting bad air from one city to another.'"

"The poor railroads!" chuckled Mr. Clyde. "They get blamed for everything, nowadays."

"It may not be the Pullman Company's fault that I don't sleep well in traveling, but they are certainly to blame for clinging to a type of conveyance specially constructed for the encouragement

## THE HEALTH MASTER

of dirt and disease. Look at the modern sleeping-car: heavy plush seats; soft hangings; thick carpets; fripperies and fopperies all as gorgeous, vulgar, expensive, tawdry, and filthy as the mind of man can devise. Add to that, windows hermetically sealed in the winter months, and you've got an ideal contrivance for the encouragement of mortality. Never do I board a sleeper without a stout hickory stick in my suit-case. No matter how low the temperature is, I pry the window of my lower berth open, and push the stick under."

"And sleep in that cold draft!" cried Mrs Clyde.

"My dear Mrs. Clyde," replied the doctor suavely, "will you tell me the difference between a draft and a wind?"

"Is it a conundrum?"

"No; but I'll answer it for you. A draft is inside a house; a wind outside. You're not afraid of wind, are you?"

"Of course not."

"Then to you an air-current is like a burglar. It's harmless enough outside the room, but as soon as it comes through a window and gets into the room, it's dangerous."

"Sound common sense!" put in Granny Sharpless. "Young man, I believe you're older than you look."

"I'm old enough to know that pure air is better

## IN TIME OF PEACE

than foul warm air, anyway. Here; I want you youngsters to understand this," he added, turning to the children. "When the blood has circulated through the system, doing all the work, it gets tired out and weak. Then the lungs bring air to it to freshen it up, and the oxygen in the air makes it strong to fight against disease and cold. But if the air is bad, the blood becomes half starved. So the man who breathes stuffy, close air all night has n't given his blood the right supply. His whole system is weakened, and he 'catches cold,' not from too much air, but too little."

"It's often struck me," said Mr. Clyde, "that I feel better traveling in Europe than in America. Yet our Pullmans are supposed to be the best in the world."

"The worst!" declared Dr. Strong forcefully. "The best in luxuries, the worst in necessities. The only real good and fairly sanitary cars operated by the Pullman Company, outside of the high-priced stateroom variety, are the second class transcontinentals, the tourist cars. They have straw seats instead of plush; light hangings, and, as a rule, good ventilation. If I go to the Pacific Coast again, it will be that way."

There was a pause, in which rose the clear whisper of Bobs, appealing to his mentor, Julia, for information.

## THE HEALTH MASTER

“Say, Junkum, how did we get so far away from home?”

“High time we came back, is n’t it, Bobs?” approved the doctor. “Well, suppose we return by way of the school-house. All of you go to Number Three but Betsey, don’t you?”

“And I’m go-un next year,” announced that young lady.

“Perhaps not,” said Mrs. Clyde. “Don’t you think, Doctor, that children are liable to catch all sorts of things in the public schools?”

“Unquestionably.”

“More so than in private schools, are n’t they?”

“Hum! Well, yes; since they’re brought into contact with a more miscellaneous lot of comrades.”

“Which is exactly why I have insisted on our sticking to the regular schools,” put in Mr. Clyde, with the air of quiet decisiveness. “I want our children to be brought up like other children!”

The mother shook her head dubiously. “I wish I were sure it is the right place for them.”

“You ought to be sure. I might even say — if you will forgive the implied criticism — that you ought to be surer than you are.”

Alarmed at his tone, the mother leaned forward.

“Is there anything the matter at Number Three?”

“Several things. Nothing that you need worry

## IN TIME OF PEACE

about immediately, however. I've been talking with some of the teachers, and found out a few points. Charley's teacher, for instance, tells me that she has a much harder time keeping the children up to their work in the winter term than at other times."

"I remember Charley's tantrums over his arithmetic, last winter," said Grandma Sharpless.

"My head felt funny. Kinder thick," defended Charley.

"That is bad," said Dr. Strong, "very bad. I've reported the teacher in that grade to Dr. Merritt, the Health Officer."

"Reported teacher?" said Charley, his eyes assuming a prominence quite startling. "What for?"

"Starving her grade."

Mrs. Clyde fairly bounced in her chair. "Our children are not supposed to eat at school, Dr. Strong."

"Starving her grade," continued the doctor, "in the most important need of the human organism, air."

"How do you reach that conclusion?"

"Evidence and experience. I remember in my college days that the winter term was considered to be the most difficult in every year. The curriculum did n't seem to show it, but every professor and every undergraduate knew it. Bad air, that's all.

## THE HEALTH MASTER

The recitation rooms were kept tightly closed. The human brain can't burn carbon and get a bright flame of intelligence without a good draft, and the breathing is the draft. Now, on the evidence of Charley's teacher, when winter comes percentages go down, although the lessons are the same. So I asked her about the ventilation and found that she had a superstitious dread of cold."

"I remember Miss Benn's room," said Julia thoughtfully. "It used to get awful hot there. I never liked that grade anyway, and Bobs got such bad deportment marks."

"Both of the twins had colds all the winter they were in that room," contributed Grandma Sharpless.

Up went Dr. Strong's hands, the long fingers doubled in, in a curious gesture which only stress of feeling ever drove him to use.

"When will the substitute mothers and fathers who run our schools learn about air!" he cried. "Air! It's the first cry of the newly born baby. Air! It's the last plea of the man with the death-rattle in his throat. It's the one free boon, and we shut it out. If I'm here next winter, I think I'll load up with stones and break some windows!"

"Lemme go with you!" cried Charley, with the eagerness of destruction proper to seven years.

"On the whole, Charley," replied the other,



## IN TIME OF PEACE

chuckling a little, "perhaps it's better to smash traditions. Not easier, but better."

"But you would n't have them study with all the windows open on a zero day!" protested Mrs. Clyde.

"Would n't I! Far rather than choke them in a close room! Why, in Chicago, the sickly children have special classes on the roof, or in the yards, all through the cold weather. They study in overcoats and mittens. And they *learn*. Not only that, but they thrive on it."

Mr. Clyde was rubbing his chin hard. "Perhaps our school system is n't all I bragged," he observed.

"Not in all respects. You still stick to that relic of barbarism, the common drinking-cup, after filtering your water. That's a joke!"

"I don't see the point," confessed Mr. Clyde. "Whom is the joke on?"

"All of you who pay for the useless filters and then settle doctors' bills for the disease spread by the drinking-cups. Don't you understand that in the common contagious diseases, the mouth is the danger point? Now, you may filter water till it's dry, but if in drinking it you put your lips to a cup soiled by the touch of diseased lips, you're in danger. We think too much of the water and too little of what contains it. I've seen a school in Auburn,

## THE HEALTH MASTER

New York, and I've seen a golf course at the Country Club in Seattle, where there is n't a glass or cup to be found; and they have two of the best water supplies I know. A tiny fountain spouts up to meet your lips, and your mouth touches nothing but the running water. The water itself being pure, you can't possibly get any infection from it."

"Can you get me a report on that for the Board of Education?" asked Mr. Clyde.

"It's already here," said Dr. Strong quietly. "That is part of my Chinese job of watch-dog. One other matter. A teacher in another grade, at Number Three, with whom I talked, stood with a pencil, which she had taken from one of her scholars, pressed to her lips. While we talked she gave it back to the child."

"Well, land sakes!" said Grandma Sharpless, "where's the harm? I suppose the poor girl was clean, was n't she?"

"How do I know? How does anybody know? There is a case on record where a teacher carried the virulent bacilli of diphtheria in her throat for three months. Suppose she had been careless about putting her lips to the various belongings of the children. How many of them do you suppose she would have killed with the deadly poison?"

"Did n't she know she had diphtheria?" asked Junkum, wide-eyed.

## IN TIME OF PEACE

“She had n’t, dear. She was what we call a ‘carrier’ of disease. For some reason which we can’t find out, a ‘carrier’ does n’t fall ill, but will give the disease to any one else as surely as a very sick person, if the germs from the throat reach the throat or lips of others.”

“Some lectures on hygiene might not be amiss in Number Three,” said Mr. Clyde.

“That’s what medical school inspectors are for — to teach the teachers. The Board of Education should be getting it started.”

“What are you doing over there, Twinkles?” said Mr. Clyde to Bettina, who had slipped from his knee and was sliding her chubby fist along the window-pane.

The child looked around. “Thwat that fly,” she explained with perfect seriousness.

“She has heard the other children talking about the fly-leaflets that have been scattered around. Where’s the fly, Toodles?”

“Up they-arr,” replied Bettina, pointing to a far corner of the pane where a big “green-bottle” bumped its head against the glass. “Come down, buzzy fly.”

“Now, where,” cried Mrs. Clyde, in despair, “do you suppose that wretched creature came from? I’m so particular always to keep the rooms screened and darkened.”

## THE HEALTH MASTER

“Please ’m, it might have come from the kitchen,” suggested Katie. “There’s a plenty of ’em there.”

“And before that it came from your next-door neighbor’s manure-heap,” added Dr. Strong. “That particular kind of fly breeds only in manure. The fact is that the fly is about the nastiest thing alive. Compared to it, a hog is a gentleman, and a vulture an epicure. It loves filth, and unhappily, it also loves clean, household foods. Therefore the path of its feet is direct between the two — from your neighbor’s stable-yard to your dinner-table.”

“Disgusting!” cried Mrs. Clyde.

“Worse than disgusting: dangerous,” returned Dr. Strong, unmoved by her distaste. “A fly’s feet are more than likely to be covered with disease-bearing matter, which he leaves behind him.”

“Something ought to be done about Freeman’s manure-heap, next door. I’ll see to it,” announced Mr. Clyde.

“Doubtless you could report him for maintaining a nuisance,” admitted Dr. Strong; “in which case he might — er — conceivably retort upon you with your unscreened garbage-pails, which are hatcheries for another variety of fly.”

“That’s a beam in the eye for you, Tom,” said Grandma Sharpless.

“Meantime I’ll have the kitchen windows and doors screened at once,” declared Mrs. Clyde.

## IN TIME OF PEACE

“That will help,” said Dr. Strong, “though it won’t cure. You can gain some idea, from this matter of the flies, how intricate a social problem health really is. No man sins to himself alone, in hygiene, and no man can thoroughly protect himself against the misdeeds of his neighbor. It’s true that there is such a thing as individual self-defense by a sort of personal fortifying of the body — I’ll take that up some other time — but it’s very limited. You can carry the fight into the enemy’s country and eradicate the evil conditions that threaten all, only by identifying yourself with your environment, and waging war on that basis. Mr. Clyde, do you know anything about the row of wooden tenements in the adjoining alley?”

“Saddler’s Shacks? Not much, except that a lot of Italians live there.”

“Some live; some die. The whole settlement is a scandal of overcrowding, dirt, and disease. I’ve made out a little local health report of the place, for the year. Of course, it’s incomplete; but it’s significant. Look it over.”

Mr. Clyde read aloud as follows: —

Diphtheria . . . . .	11 cases	2 deaths
Measles . . . . .	20	1
Typhoid fever . . . . .	4	2
Scarlet fever . . . . .	13	1
Whooping-cough . . . . .	20	3
Acute intestinal trouble . . . . .	45	10

## THE HEALTH MASTER

Influenza . . . . .	16 cases	1 deaths
Tuberculosis . . . . .	6	1
Pneumonia . . . . .	9	4

“What do you think of it?” asked Dr. Strong.

“It’s a bad showing.”

“It’s a bad showing and a bad property. Why don’t you buy it?”

“Who? I? Are you advising me to buy a job-lot of diseases?” queried Mr. Clyde.

“Well — as a protective investment. We’d be safe here if those tenements were run differently.”

“But we are n’t in touch with them at all. They are around the corner on another block.”

“Nevertheless, visitors pass daily between your house and Saddler’s Shacks. One of the young men from there delivers bread, often with his bare and probably filthy hands. Two of the women peddle fruit about the neighborhood. What Saddler’s Shacks get in the way of disease, you may easily get by transmission from them. Further, the sanitary arrangements of the shacks are primitive, not to say prehistoric, and, incidentally, illegal. They are within the area of fly-travel from here, so both the human and the winged disease-bearers have the best possible opportunity to pick up infection in its worst form.”

“Ugh!” said Mrs. Sharpless. “I’ll never eat with a fly again as long as I live!”

## IN TIME OF PEACE

“Would n’t it be a simple matter to have the Bureau of Health condemn the property?” asked Mr. Clyde.

“It would not.” Dr. Strong spoke with curt emphasis.

“Certain features, you said, are illegal.”

“But pull is still stronger than law in this city.”

“Who owns Saddler’s Shacks?” asked Grandma Sharpless, going with characteristic directness to the point.

“Mrs. Carson Searle.”

“Why, then, it’s all right,” asserted Mrs. Clyde. “I know Mrs. Searle very well. She’s a leader in church and charitable work. Of course, she does n’t know about the condition of the property.”

“She knows enough about it,” retorted Dr. Strong grimly, “to go to the Mayor over the Health Officer’s head, and put a stop to Dr. Merritt’s order for the premises to be cleaned up at the owner’s expense. She wants her profits undisturbed. And now, before the conference breaks up, I propose that we organize the Household Protective Association.”

“Oh, can we children belong?” cried Julia.

“Of course. There are offices and honors enough for all. Mr. Clyde shall be president; Mrs. Sharpless, vice-president and secretary; Mrs. Clyde, treasurer, and each one of the rest of you shall have a committee. Katie, I appoint you chairman of

## THE HEALTH MASTER

the Committee on Food, and if any more flies get into your kitchen, you can report 'em to the Committee on Flies, Miss Bettina Clyde, chairman; motto, 'Thwat that fly!' Manny, you like to go to the farm; you get the Committee on Milk Supply. Junkum, your committee shall be that of school conditions. Bobs, water is your element. As Water Commissioner you must keep watch on the city reports. I'll see that they are sent you regularly; and the typhoid records."

"You have n't left anything for me," protested Charley.

"Have n't I! You've got one of the biggest of all jobs, air. If the windows are n't properly wide when the house is asleep, I want to know it from you, and you'll have to get up early to find out. If the Street Cleaning Department sweeps the air full of dust because it's too lazy to wash down the roadway first, we'll make a committee report to the Mayor."

Bettina, *alias* Toots, *alias* Twinkles, *alias* the Cherub, trotted over and laid two plump hands on the doctor's knee.

"Ain't you goin' to be anyfing in the play?" she asked.

"I?" said Dr. Strong. "Of course, Toots. Every real association has to have officers and membership, you know. I'm the Member."



### III

#### REPAIRING BETTINA

“MEDICINE would be the ideal profession if it did not involve giving pain,” said Dr. Strong, setting a paper-weight upon some school reports which had just come in.

“You’ve been here three months and you haven’t hurt any one yet,” said Mr. Clyde easily.

“No. I’ve been cautious, and perhaps a little cowardly. My place as Chinese doctor has been such a sinecure that I’ve let things go. Moreover, I’ve wanted to gain Mrs. Clyde’s confidence as much as possible, before coming to the point.”

The expression of Mr. Clyde’s keen, good-humored face altered and focused sharply. He scrutinized the doctor in silence. “Well, let’s have it,” he said at length. “Is it my wife?”

“No. It’s Bettina.”

The father winced. “That baby!” he said. “Serious?”

“On the contrary, quite simple. *If* it is handled wisely. But it means — pain. Not a great deal; but still, pain.”

“An operation?”

## THE HEALTH MASTER

Dr. Strong nodded. "Merely a minor one. I've sounded Mrs. Clyde, without her knowing it, and she will oppose it. Mrs. Sharpless, too, I fear. You know how women dread suffering for the children they love."

Again Mr. Clyde winced. "It's — it's necessary, of course," he said.

"Not to do it would be both stupid and cruel. Shall we call in the women and have it out with them?"

For reply, Mr. Clyde pressed a button and sent the servant who responded, for Mrs. Clyde and her mother. Grandma Sharpless arrived first, took stock of the men's grave faces, and sat down silently, folding her strong, competent hands in her lap. But no sooner had Mrs. Clyde caught sight of her husband's face than her hand went to her throat.

"What is it?" she said. "The children —"

"Nothing to be alarmed about, Mrs. Clyde," said Dr. Strong quickly. He pushed a chair toward her. "Sit down. It's a question of — of what I might call carpenter-work" — the mother laughed a nervous relief — "on Betty."

"Betty?" Her fears fluttered in her voice. "What about Betty?"

"She needs repairing; that's all."

"I don't know what you mean! Is she hurt?"

## REPAIRING BETTINA

“Not at all. She is breathing wrong. She breathes through her mouth.”

“Oh!” There was reassurance and a measure even of contempt in Mrs. Clyde’s voice. “Lots of children do that. Perhaps she’s got a little cold.”

“It is n’t that. This is no new thing with her. She is a mouth-breather.”

“I’ll see that it’s corrected,” promised the mother.

“Only one thing can correct it,” said Dr. Strong gravely. “There’s a difficulty that must be removed.”

“You mean an operation? On that baby? Do you know that she is n’t five yet? And you want to cut her with a knife —”

“Steady, Myra,” came Mr. Clyde’s full, even speech. “Dr. Strong does n’t *want* to do anything except what he considers necessary.”

“Necessary! Supposing she does breathe through her mouth! What excuse is that for torturing her — my baby!”

“I’ll answer that, Mrs. Clyde,” said the doctor, with patient politeness. Walking over to the window he threw it up and called, “Oh, Tootles! Twinkles! Honorable Miss Cherub, come up here. I’ve got something to show you.” And presently in came the child, dragging a huge and dilapidated doll.

## THE HEALTH MASTER

She was a picture of rosy health, but, for the first time, the mother noted the drooping of the lower jaw, and the slight lift of the upper lip, revealing the edges of two pearly teeth. Dr. Strong took from a drawer a little wooden box, adjusted a lever and, placing the ear pieces in Betty's ears, bade her listen. But the child shook her head. Again he adjusted the indicator. This time, too, she said that she heard nothing. Not until the fourth change did she announce delightedly that she heard a pretty bell, but that it sounded very far away.

"Now we'll try it on mother," said the experimenter, and added in a low tone as he handed it to Mrs. Clyde, "I've set it two points less loud than Betty's mark. Can you hear it?"

Mrs. Clyde nodded. A look of dread came into her eyes.

"Now, Tootles, open your mouth," directed the doctor, producing a little oblong metal contrivance.

"I have n't got any sore froat," objected the young lady.

"No, but I want to look at the thoughts inside your head," he explained mysteriously.

With entire confidence the child opened her mouth as wide as possible, and Dr. Strong, setting the instrument far back against her tongue, applied his eye to the other end.

## REPAIRING BETTINA

“All right, Toots,” he said, after a moment. “Get your breath, and then let mother look.”

He showed Mrs. Clyde how to press the tiny button setting aglow an electric lamp and lighting up the nasal passages above the throat, which were reflected on a mirror within the contrivance and thus made clear to the eye. Following his instructions, she set her eye to the miniature telescope as the physician pressed it against the little tongue.

“Well, Betty,” said Dr. Strong, as the implement was again withdrawn, “you’ve got very nice thoughts inside that wise little head of yours. Now you can continue bringing up your doll in the way she should go.”

As the door closed behind her, the mother turned to Dr. Strong.

“Is she going to be deaf?” she asked breathlessly.

“Of course not,” he reassured her. “That will be taken care of. What did you see above the back of the throat?”

“Little things like tiny stalactites hanging down.”

“Adenoids.”

“Where could she have gotten adenoids?” cried Mrs. Clyde.

“From her remotest imaginable ancestor, probably.”

“Why, are n’t they a disease?”

## THE HEALTH MASTER

“No. An inheritance. The race has always had them. Probably they’re vestigial salivary glands, the use of which we’ve outgrown. Unfortunately they may overdevelop and block up the air-passages. Then they have to come out.”

For the first time in the conference Grandma Sharpless gathered force and speech.

“Young man,” she said solemnly — rather accusingly, in fact — “if the Lord put adenoids in the human nose he put ’em there for some purpose.”

“Doubtless. But that purpose, whatever it may have been, no longer exists.”

“Everything in the human body has some use,” she persisted.

“Had,” corrected Dr. Strong. “Not has. How about your appendix?”

Mrs. Sharpless’s appendix, like the wicked, had long since ceased from troubling, and was now at rest in alcohol in a doctor’s office, having, previous to the change of location, given its original proprietress the one bad scare of her life. Therefore, she blinked, not being provided with a ready answer.

“The ancestors of man,” said Dr. Strong, “were endowed with sundry organs, like the appendix and the adenoids, which civilized man is better off without. And, as civilized man possesses a God-given intelligence to tell him how to get rid of them, he wisely does so when it’s necessary.”

## REPAIRING BETTINA

“What have the adenoids to do with Betty’s deafness?” asked Mr. Clyde.

“Everything. They divert the air-currents, thicken the tubes connecting throat and ear, and interfere with the hearing. Don’t let that little deficiency in keenness of ear bother you, though. Most likely it will pass with the removal of the adenoids. Even if it should n’t, it is too slight to be a handicap. But I want the child to be repaired before any of the familiar and more serious adenoid difficulties are fixed on her for life.”

“Are there others?” asked Mrs. Clyde apprehensively.

“Oh, every imaginable kind. How could it be otherwise? Here’s the very first principle of life, the breath, being diverted from its proper course, in the mouth-breather; is n’t a general derangement of functions the inevitable result? The hearing is affected, as I’ve shown you already. The body does n’t get its proper amount of oxygen, and the digestion suffers. The lungs draw their air-supply in the wrong way, and the lung capacity is diminished. The open mouth admits all kinds of dust particles which inflame the throat and make it hospitable to infection. By incorrect breathing the facial aspect of the mouth-breather is variously modified and always for the worse; since the soft facial bones of youth are altered by the continual

## THE HEALTH MASTER

striking of an air-current on the roof of the mouth, which is pushed upward, distorting the whole face."

"None of *our* children are distorted. You won't find a better-looking lot anywhere," challenged Mrs. Sharpless, the grandmother's pride up in arms.

"True. None of them has had overdeveloped adenoids, except Betty. The others all breathe through their noses. See how different their mouths are from Betty's lifting upper lip — very fascinating now, but later — Well, I've gone so far as to prepare an object-lesson for you. Three extreme types of the mouth-breathers are here from school by my invitation to have some lemonade and cakes. They are outside now. When they come in, I want each of you to make an analysis of one of them, without their seeing it, of course. Talk with them about their work in school. You may get ideas from that. Mrs. Sharpless, you take the taller of the girls; Mrs. Clyde, you study the shorter. The boy goes to you, Mr. Clyde."

The trio of visitors entered, somewhat mystified, but delighted to be the guests of their friend, Dr. Strong, who had a faculty of interesting children. So shrewdly did he divert and hold their attention that they concluded their visit and left without having suspected the scrutiny which they had undergone.



## REPAIRING BETTINA

“Now, Mrs. Clyde,” said Dr. Strong, after the good-byes were said, “what about your girl?”

“Nothing in particular except that she’s mortally homely and does n’t seem very bright.”

“Homely in what respect?”

“Well, hatchet-faced, to use a slang term.”

“It’s not a slang term any more; it’s a medical term to describe a typical result of mouth-breathing. The diversion of the breath destroys the even arch of the teeth, pushes the central teeth up, giving that squirrel-like expression that is so unpleasantly familiar, lengthens the mouth from the lower jaw’s hanging down, and sharpens the whole profile to an edge, and an ugly one. Adenoids!”

“My tall girl I thought at first was dull, but I found the poor thing was a little deaf,” said Grandma Sharpless. “She’s got a horrid skin; so sallow and rough and pimply. I don’t think her digestion is good. In fact, she said she had trouble with her stomach.”

“Naturally. Her teeth are all out of place from facial malformation caused by mouth-breathing. That means that she can’t properly chew her food. That means in turn that her digestion must suffer. That, again, means a bad complexion and a debilitated constitution. Adenoids! What’s your analysis, Mr. Clyde?”

“That boy? He’s two grades behind where he

## THE HEALTH MASTER

should be in school. It takes him some time to get the drift of anything that's said to him. I should judge his brain is weak. Anyway, I don't see where he keeps it, for the upper part of his face is all wrong, the roof of the mouth is so pushed up. The poor little chap's brain-pan must be contracted."

"Perfectly correct, and all the result of adenoids again. The boy is the worst example I've been able to find. But all three of the children are terribly handicapped; one by a painful homeliness, one by a ruined digestion, and the boy by a mental deficiency — and all simply and solely because they were neglected by ignorant parents and still more ignorant school authorities."

"Would you have the public schools deal with such details?" asked Mr. Clyde.

"Certainly. Have you ever heard what Goler, the Health Officer of Rochester, asked that city? 'Ought n't we to close the schools and repair the children?' he asked, and he kept on asking, until now Rochester has a regular system of looking after the noses, mouths, and eyes of its young. They want their children, in that city, to start the battle of life in fighting trim."

"But you don't see many misshapen children about," objected Mrs. Sharpless.

"Then it's because you don't look. Call to your mind Hogarth's caricatures. Do you remember

## REPAIRING BETTINA

that in his crowds there are always clubfooted, or humpbacked, or deformed people? In those days such deformities were very common because medical science did n't know how to correct them in the young. To-day facial deformities, to the scientific eye, are quite as common, though not as obvious. We're just learning how to correct them, and to know that the hatchet-face is a far more serious clog on a human being's career than is the club-foot."

"If Betty had a clubfoot, of course —" began Mrs. Clyde.

"Of course, you'd have it repaired at whatever cost of suffering. You'd submit her to a long and serious operation; and probably to the constant pain of a rigid iron frame upon her leg for months, perhaps years. To obviate the deformity you'd consider that not too high a price to pay, and rightly. Well, here is the case of a more far-reaching malformation, curable by a minor operation, without danger, mercifully quick, with only the briefest after-effects of pain, and you draw back from it. Why?"

"The thought of the knife on that little face. Is — is that all there is to be done?"

"No, there are the teeth. They should be looked to."

"Nonsense! They're only first teeth," said

## THE HEALTH MASTER

Grandma Sharpless vigorously. "What does a doctor know about teeth?"

"Lots, if he knows his business. There would be fewer dyspeptics if physicians in general sent their patients to the dentist more promptly, and kept them in condition to chew their food."

"That's all very well, when people have their real, lasting teeth," returned the grandmother. "But Betty's first set will be gone in a few years. Then it will be time enough to bother the poor child."

"Apparently, Mrs. Sharpless," said Dr. Strong mildly, "you consider that teeth come in crops, like berries; one crop now, a second and distinct crop later. That is n't the way growth takes place in the human mouth. The first teeth are to the second almost what the blossom is to the fruit. I shall want immediately to take Betty to the dentist, and have him keep watch over her mouth with the understanding that he may charge a bonus on every tooth he keeps in after its time. The longer the first lot lasts, the better the second lot are. But there is no use making the minor repairs unless the main structure is put right first."

"I must see Betty," said Mrs. Clyde abruptly, and left the room. Mrs. Sharpless followed.

"Now comes the first real split." Dr. Strong turned to Mr. Clyde. "They're going to vote me down."

## REPAIRING BETTINA

“If it comes to a pinch,” said Mr. Clyde quietly, “my wife will accept my decision.”

“That is what I want to avoid. Where would my influence with her be, if I were obliged to appeal to you on the very first test of professional authority? No, I shall try to carry this through myself, even at the risk of having to seem a little brutal.”

Mr. Clyde lifted his eyebrows, but he only nodded, as the door opened and the two women reëntered.

“Doctor,” said Mrs. Clyde, “if, in a year from now, Betty has n’t outgrown the mouth-breathing, I—I—you may take what measures you think best.”

“In a year from now, the danger will be more advanced. There is not the faintest chance of correction of the fault without an operation.”

“I can’t help it! I can’t stand the thought of it, now,” said Mrs. Clyde brokenly. “You should see her, poor baby, as she looks now, asleep on the lounge in the library, and even you, Doctor” (the doctor smiled a little awry at that), “could n’t bear to think of the blood and the pain.” She was silent, shuddering.

“My dear Mrs. Clyde, the blood will be no more than a nosebleed, and the pain won’t amount to much, thanks to anæsthesia. Let me see.” He stepped to the door and, opening it softly, looked in, then beckoned to the others to join him.

## THE HEALTH MASTER

The child lay asleep on her side, one cupped pink hand hanging, the other back of her head. Her jaw had dropped and the corner of the mouth had slackened down in an unnatural droop. The breath hissed a little between the soft lips. Dr. Strong closed the door again.

“Well?” he said, and there was a suggestion of the sternness of judgment in the monosyllable.

“I am her mother.” Mrs. Clyde faced him, a spot of color in each cheek. “A mother is a better judge of her children than any doctor can be!”

“You think so?” said Dr. Strong deliberately. “Then I must set you right. Do you recall sending Charley away from the table for clumsiness, two days ago?”

“Why, yes.” Mrs. Clyde’s expressive eyes widened. “He overturned his glass, after my warning him.”

“And once last week for the same thing?”

“Yes, but what —”

“Pardon me, do you think your mother-judgment was wise then?”

“Well, really, Dr. Strong,” said Mrs. Clyde, flushing, “you will hardly assume the right of control of the children’s manners —”

“This is not a question of manners. There is where your error lies,” interrupted the doctor. “Against your mother-judgment I set my doctor-

## REPAIRING BETTINA

judgment, and I tell you now" — his voice rose a little from its accustomed polished smoothness, and took on authority — "I tell you that the boy is no more responsible for his clumsiness than Betty is for bad breathing. It's a disease, very faint but unmistakable."

"Not Charley!" said his father incredulously, "Why, he's as husky as a colt."

"He will be, please God, in a few years, but just now he has — don't be alarmed; it's nothing like so important as it sounds — he has a slight heart trouble, probably the sequel to that light and perhaps mismanaged diphtheria attack. It's quite a common result and is nearly always outgrown, and it shows in almost unnoticeable lack of control of hands and feet. I observed Charley's clumsiness long ago; listened at his heart, and heard the murmur there."

"And you never told us!" reproached the grandmother.

"What was the use? There's nothing to be done; nothing that needs to be done, except watch, and that I've been doing. And I did n't want to worry you."

"Then I've been punishing him for what was n't his fault," said Mrs. Clyde in a choked voice.

"You have. Don't punish Betty for what is n't hers," countered the physician, swiftly taking

## THE HEALTH MASTER

advantage of the opening. "Give her her chance. Mrs. Clyde, if Betty were my own, she could hardly have wound herself more closely around my heart-strings. I want to see her grow from a strong and beautiful child to a strong and beautiful girl, and finally to a strong and beautiful woman. It rests with you. Watch her breathing to-night, as she sleeps — and tell me to-morrow."

He rose and left the room. Mr. Clyde walked over and put a hand softly on his wife's soft hair; then brushed her cheek with his lips.

"It's up to you, dearest," he said gently.

. . . . .

Three days later, Betty, overhanging the side fence, was heard, by her shamelessly eavesdropping father, imparting information to her next-door neighbor and friend.

"You'd ought to get a new nothe, Thally. It don't hurt much, an' breathin' ith heapth more fun!"

Pondering a chain of suggestions induced by this advice, Mr. Clyde walked slowly to the house. As was his habit in thought, he proceeded to rub the idea into his chin, which was quite pink from friction by the time he reached the library. There he found Dr. Strong and Mrs. Sharpless in consultation.



## REPAIRING BETTINA

“What are you two conspiring about?” he asked, ceasing to rub the troubled spot.

“Matter of school reports,” answered the doctor. He glanced at the other’s chin and smiled. “And what is worrying you?” he asked.

“I’m wondering whether I have n’t made a mistake.”

“Quite possibly. It’s done by some of our best people,” remarked the physician dryly.

“Not a pleasant possibility in this case. You remember quoting Rochester as to closing the schools and repairing the children. To-day, as I heard Betty commenting on her new nose, it suddenly came to me that I was obstructing that very system of repairs by which she is benefiting, for less fortunate youngsters in our schools.”

“You!” said Dr. Strong in surprise.

“As president of the Public Health League. The Superintendent of Schools came to me with a complaint against Dr. Merritt, the Health Officer, who, he claimed, was usurping authority in his scheme for a special inspection system to examine all school-children at regular intervals.”

“Ought to have been established long ago,” declared Dr. Strong.

“The Superintendent thinks otherwise. He claims that it would interfere with school routine. It’s the duty of the health officials, he says, to con-

## THE HEALTH MASTER

trol epidemics from without, to keep sickness out of the schools, not to hunt around among the children, scaring them to death about diseases that probably are n't there."

Dr. Strong muttered something which Grandma Sharpless pretended not to hear. "And you've agreed to support him in that attitude?" he queried.

"Well, I'm afraid I've half committed myself."

"Heaven forgive you! Why, see here, Clyde, your dodo of a superintendent talks of keeping sickness out of the schools. Does n't that mean keeping sickness out of the pupils? There's just one way to do that: get every child into the best possible condition of repair — eyes, ears, nose, throat, teeth, stomach, everything, and maintain them in that state. Then disease will have a hard time breaking down the natural resistance of the system. Damaged organs in a child are like flaws in a ship's armor-plate; a vital weakening of the defenses. And remember, the child is always battling against one besieging germ or another."

"Why can't medical science wipe out the germs?" demanded Mrs. Sharpless. "It's always claiming to do such wonders."

"In a few instances it can. In typhoid we fight and win the battle from the outside by doing that very thing. In smallpox, and to a lesser extent in

## REPAIRING BETTINA

diphtheria, we can build up an effective artificial barrier by inoculation. But, as medical men are now coming to realize, in the other important contagions of childhood, measles, whooping-cough, and scarlet fever, we must fight the disease from inside the individual; that is, make as nearly impregnable as possible the natural fortifications of the body to resist and repel the invasion. That is what school medical inspection aims at."

"You would n't rank whooping-cough and measles with scarlet fever, would you?" said Mrs. Sharpless incredulously.

"Why not? Although scarlet fever has the worst after-effects,—though not much more serious than those of measles,—the three are almost equal so far as the death-rate is concerned."

"Surely not!" protested the old lady. "Why, I'd rather have measles in the house ten times, or whooping-cough either, than scarlet fever once."

"You're about ten times as likely to have."

She looked puzzled. "But what did you mean by saying that one of 'em is as bad as the other?"

"That it's as dangerous to the community, though not to the individual."

"Just a little deep for me, too," confessed Mr. Clyde.

"Yet it's perfectly simple. Here, take an

## THE HEALTH MASTER

example. Would you rather be bitten by a rattlesnake or a mosquito?"

"A mosquito, of course."

"Naturally. Yet a rattlesnake country is a good deal safer than a mosquito country. You would n't hesitate, on account of your health, to move to Arizona, where rattlesnakes live?"

"I suppose not."

"But you *would* be afraid to establish your family in the malarious swamps of the South?"

"Certainly."

"Well, people who die of malaria die of mosquito bite, since the mosquito is the only agency of infection. Thus, it reduces to this: that while the individual rattler is more dangerous than the individual mosquito, the mosquito, in general, kills her thousands where the snake kills one. Now — with considerable modification of the ratio — scarlet fever is the rattlesnake; whooping-cough and measles are the mosquitoes. It is just as important to keep measles out of a community as it is to shut out scarlet fever. In fact, if you will study the records of this city, you will find that in two out of the last three years, measles has killed more people than scarlet fever, and whooping-cough more than either of them."

"What are we going to do about it?" asked the practical-minded Mr. Clyde.

## REPAIRING BETTINA

“Ah, if some one would only tell us that! In measles the worst of the harm is done before the disease announces itself definitely. The most contagious stage is previous to the appearance of the telltale rash. There’s nothing but a snuffling nose, and perhaps a very little fever to give advance notice that the sufferer is a firebrand.”

“Well, you can’t shut a child out of school for every little sore throat,” observed Mrs. Sharpless.

“As to that I’m not so sure,” replied the physician slowly and thoughtfully. “A recent writer on school epidemics has suggested educating the public to believe that every sore throat is contagious.”

“That is n’t true, is it?” asked Mr. Clyde.

“No. Personally I believe that, while a physician is often justified in deceiving his patient, he is never justified in fooling the public. In the long run they find him out and his influence for good is lessened. Yet that sore-throat theory is near enough true to be a strong temptation. Every sore throat is suspicious; that is n’t too much to say. And, with a thorough school-inspection system, it is quite possible that epidemics could be headed off by isolating the early-discovered cases of sore throat. But, an epidemic of the common contagions, once well under way, seems to be quite beyond any certainty of control.”

## THE HEALTH MASTER

“Do you mean to say that quarantine and disinfection and isolation are all useless?” asked Mr. Clyde.

“No. I won’t go as far as that. They may exercise a check in some cases. But I will say this: that all our cumbersome and expensive and often harassing hygienic measures in the contagious diseases have n’t made good. Obviously, if they had, we should see a diminution of the ills which they are supposed to limit. There is no diminution. No, we’re on the wrong tack. Until we know what the right tack is, we perhaps ought to keep on doing what we can in the present line. It’s a big, complicated subject, and one that won’t be settled until we find out what scarlet fever, measles, and whooping-cough really are, and what causes them. While we’re waiting for the bacteriologist to tell us that, the soundest principle of defense that we have is to keep the body up to its highest pitch of resistance. That is why I support medical inspection for schools as an essential measure.”

“To repair the children without closing the schools, if I may modify Dr. Goler’s epigram,” suggested Mr. Clyde.

“Exactly. Eventually we shall have to build as well as repair. A very curious thing is happening to Young America in the Eastern States. The growing generation is shrinking in weight and height.”

## REPAIRING BETTINA

“Which is almost contradictory enough for a paradox,” remarked Mr. Clyde.

“It’s a melancholy and literal fact. You know, there’s a height and weight basis for age upon which our school grading system rests. The authorities have been obliged to reconstruct it because the children are continuously growing smaller for their years. *There’s* work for the inspection force!”

“You’d put the children on pulleys and stretch ’em out, I suppose!” gibed Grandma Sharpless.

“That might work, too,” replied the doctor, unruffled. “The Procrustean system is n’t so bad, if old Procrustes had only sent his victims to the gymnasium instead of putting them to bed. Yes, a quarter of an hour with the weight-pulleys every day would help undersized kiddies a good deal. But principally I should want the school-inspectors to keep the youngsters playing.”

“You don’t have to teach a child to play,” sniffed Grandma Sharpless, with womanly scorn of mere man’s views concerning children.

“Pardon me, Mrs. Sharpless, you taught your children to play.”

“I! Whatever makes you think that?”

“The simple fact that they did n’t die in babyhood.”

Mrs. Sharpless looked at him with a severity not unmingled with suspicion. “Sometimes, young

## THE HEALTH MASTER

man," she observed, "you talk like a — a — a gump!"

"Take that, Strong!" said Mr. Clyde, joining in the doctor's laugh against himself.

"Facts may sometimes sound foolish," admitted Dr. Strong. "If they do, that's the fault of the speaker. And it *is* a fact that every mother teaches her baby to play. Watch the cat if you don't believe me. The wisest woman in America points out in her recent book that it is the mother's playing with her baby which rouses in it the will to live. Without that will to live none of us would survive."

"I don't know who your wisest woman in America may be, but I don't believe she knows what she is talking about," declared Grandma Sharpless flatly.

"I've never known her when she did n't," retorted the doctor. "If Jane Addams of Hull House is n't an expert in life, mental, moral, and physical, then there's no such person! Why, see here, Mrs. Sharpless; do you know why a baby's chance of survival is less in the very best possible institution without its mother, than in the very worst imaginable tenement with its mother, even though the mother is unable to nurse it?"

"It is n't as well tended, I expect."

"All its physical surroundings are a thousand times more advantageous: better air, better food, better temperature, better safeguarding against



## REPAIRING BETTINA

disease; yet babies in these surroundings just pine away and die. It's almost impossible to bring up an infant on an institutional system. The infant death-rate of these well-meaning places is so appalling that nobody dares tell it publicly. And it is so, simply because there is no one to play with the babies. The nurses have n't the time, though they have the instinct. I tell you, the most wonderful, mystic, profound thing in all the world, to me, is the sight of a young girl's intuitive yearning to dandle every baby she may see. That's the universal, world-old, world-wide, deep-rooted genius of motherhood, which antedates the humankind, stirring within her and impelling her to help keep the race alive — by playing with the baby."

"H'm! I had n't thought of it in that way," confessed Grandma Sharpless. "There may be something in what you say, young man. But by the time children reach school age I guess they've learned that lesson."

"Not always. At least, not properly, always. Let's consult the Committee on School of our household organization."

He sent for eight-year-old Julia.

"Question to lay before you, Miss Chairwoman," said Dr. Strong. "How many of the girls in your grade hang around the hall or doorways during recess?"

## THE HEALTH MASTER

“Oh, lots!” said Julia promptly.

“Are they the bigger girls? or the smaller ones?”

The Committee on School considered the matter gravely. “Mary Hinks, she’s tall, but she’s awful thin and sickly,” she pronounced. “Dot Griswold and Cora Smith and Tiny Warley — why, I guess they’re most all the littlest girls in the class.”

Dr. Strong nodded. “Sure to be the under-nourished, anæmic, lethargic ones,” said he. “They’re forgetting the lessons of their babyhood. Insensibly they are losing the will to live. But there’s nobody to tell them so. A thorough medical inspection service would correct that. It would include school-nurses who would go to the homes of the children and tell the parents what was the matter. Such a system might not be warranted to keep epidemics out of our schools, but it would stretch out and fill out those meager youngsters’ brains as well as bodies, and fit them to combat illness if it did come. The whole-theory of the school’s attitude toward the child seems to me misconceived by those who have charge of the system. It assumes too much in authority and avoids too much in responsibility.

“Take the case of John Smith, who has two children to bring up under our enlightened system of government. Government says to John Smith, ‘Send your children to school!’ ‘Suppose I don’t wish to?’

## REPAIRING BETTINA

says John Smith. 'You've got to,' says Government. 'It is n't safe for me to have them left uneducated.' 'Will you take care of them while they're at school?' says John Smith. 'I'll train their minds,' says Government. 'What about their bodies?' says John Smith. 'Hm!' says Government; 'that's a horse of another color.' 'Then I'll come with them and see that they're looked after physically,' says John Smith. 'You *will* not!' says Government. 'I'm *in loco parentis*, while they're in school.' 'Then you take the entire *loco* of the *parentis*,' says John Smith. 'If you take my children away on the ground that you're better fitted to care for their minds than I am, you ought to be at least as ready to look after their health. Otherwise,' says John Smith, 'go and teach yourself to stand on your head. You can't teach *my* children.' Now," concluded Dr. Strong, "do you see any flaws in the Smith point of view?"

"Just plain common sense," approved Grandma Sharpless.

"Clyde," said Dr. Strong, with a twinkle, "if you don't stop rubbing a hole in your chin, I'll have to repair *you*. What's preying on your mind?"

"I am trying," replied Mr. Clyde deliberately, "to figure out, with reference to the School Superintendent and myself, just how a man who has made a fool of himself can write a letter to another man

## THE HEALTH MASTER

who has helped the first man make a fool of himself, admitting that he's made a fool of himself, and yet avoid embarrassment, either to the man who has made a fool of himself or to the other man who aided the man in making a fool of himself. Do you get that?"

Dr. Strong rose. "I'm a Chinese doctor," he observed, "not a Chinese puzzle-solver. That's a matter between you and your ink-well. Meantime, having attained the point for which I've been climbing, I now declare this session adjourned."

## IV

### THE CORNER DRUG-STORE

“No, it won’t add to the attractiveness of the neighborhood, perhaps,” said Mrs. Clyde thoughtfully. “But how convenient it will be!”

Mr. Clyde had come home with the news that a drug-store was to be opened shortly on the adjacent corner. Shifting his position to dodge a foliage-piercing shaft of sunlight — they were all sitting out on the shady lawn, in the cool of a September afternoon — Dr. Strong shook his head.

“Too convenient, altogether,” he observed.

“How’s that?” queried Mr. Clyde. “A drug-store is like a gun in Texas: you may not need it often, but when you do need it, you need it like blazes.”

“True enough. But most people over-patronize the drug-store.”

“Not this family; at least, since our house-doctor came to keep us well on the Chinese plan,” said Mrs. Clyde gracefully.

But Dr. Strong only looked rueful. “Your Chinese doctor has to plead guilty to negligence of what has been going on under his very nose.”

## THE HEALTH MASTER

“Oh, not more trouble!” pleaded Mrs. Clyde. She had come through the dreaded ordeal of little Betty’s operation for adenoids — which had proved to be, after all, so slight and comparatively painless — with a greatly augmented respect for and trust in Dr. Strong; but her nerves still quivered.

“Nothing to trouble you,” the doctor assured her, “but enough to make me feel guilty — and stupid. Have you noticed any change in Manny, lately?”

“Manny” was fourteen-year-old Maynard Clyde, the oldest of the children; a high school lad, tall, lathy, athletic, and good-tempered.

“The boy is as nervous as a witch,” put in Grandma Sharpless. “I’ve noticed it since early summer.”

“Then I wish you had taught me my trade,” said Dr. Strong. “Manny is so husky and active that I’ve hardly given him a thought.”

“Well, what’s wrong with him?” asked the father anxiously.

“Too much drug-store,” was the prompt reply.

“Not drugs!” cried Mrs. Clyde, horrified. “That child!”

“Well, no; not in the sense you mean it. Wait; there he is now. Manny!” he called, raising his voice. “Come over here a minute, will you?”

The boy ambled over, and dropped down on the grass. He was brown, thin, and hard-trained; but there was a nervous pucker between his eyes, which

## THE CORNER DRUG-STORE

his father noted for the first time. "What's this? A meeting of the Board? Anything for the Committee on Milk Supply to do?" he asked.

"Not at present," answered Dr. Strong, "except to answer a question or two. You don't drink coffee, do you?"

"Of course not. I'm trying for shortstop on the junior nine, you know."

"How are you making out?"

"Rotten!" said the boy despondently. "I don't seem to have any grip on myself this year. Sort o' get the rattles."

"Hm-m-m. Feel pretty thirsty after the practice, and usually stop in at the soda-fountain for some of those patent soft drinks advertised to be harmless but stimulating, don't you?"

"Yes," said the boy, surprised.

"Ah," said the doctor carelessly; "three or four glasses a day, I suppose?"

Manny thought a moment. "All of that," he said.

"Well, you quit it," advised the doctor, "if you want to make the ball team. It will put you off your game worse than tea or coffee. Tell the athletic instructor I said so, will you?"

"Sure!" said the boy. "I did n't know there was any harm in it."

As Manny walked away, Dr. Strong turned to

## THE HEALTH MASTER

Mr. Clyde. "I found out about Manny by accident. No wonder the boy is nervous. He's been drinking that stuff like water, with no thought of what's in it."

"What *is* in it?" said Mrs. Clyde.

"Caffeine, generally. The most widely used of the lot is a mixture of fruit syrups doctored up with that drug. There's as much nerve-excitation in a glass of it — yes, and more — than in a cup of strong coffee. What would you think of a fourteen-year-old boy who drank five cups of strong coffee every day?"

"I'd think his parents were fools," declared Grandma Sharpless bluntly.

"Or his physician," suggested Dr. Strong. "I've seen cases of people drinking twenty to twenty-five glasses of that 'harmless' stuff every day. Of course, they were on the road to nervous smash-up. But the craving for it was established and they had n't the nerve to stop."

"The soda-fountain as a public peril," said Mr. Clyde, with a smile.

"There's more in that than can be smiled away," retorted the doctor vigorously. "What between nerve-foods that are simply disguised 'bracers,' and dangerous, heart-depressing dopes, like bromo-seltzer, the soda-fountain does its share of damage in the community."



## THE CORNER DRUG-STORE

“What about soda-water; that is innocent, is n’t it?” asked Mrs. Clyde.

“Yes. If the syrups are pure, soda-water is a good thing in moderation. So are the mineral waters. But there is this to be said about soda-water and candy, particularly the latter —”

“I’ve always said,” broke in Grandma Sharpless, “that candy-eating would ruin any digestion.”

“Then you’ve always been wrong, ma’am,” said Dr. Strong. “Candy, well and honestly made, is excellent food at the proper time. The trouble is, both with candy and with the heavy, rich soda-waters, that people are continually filling up with them between meals. Now the stomach is a machine with a great amount of work to do, and is entitled to some consideration. Clyde, what would happen to the machines in your factory, if you did n’t give them proper intervals of rest?”

“They’d be very short-lived,” said Mr. Clyde. “There’s a curious thing about machinery which everybody knows but nobody understands: running a machine twenty-four hours a day for one week gives it harder wear than running it twelve hours a day for a month. It needs a regular rest.”

“So with the machinery of digestion,” said the doctor. “The stomach and intestines have their hard work after meals. How are they to rest up, if an odd lot of candy or a slab of rich ice-cream soda

## THE HEALTH MASTER

come sliding down between whiles to be attended to? Eat your candy at the end of a meal, if you want it. It's a good desert. But whatever you eat, give your digestion a fair chance."

"You can digest anything if you use Thingumbob Pills," observed Mr. Clyde sardonically. "The newspapers say so."

"That's the kind of doctrine that makes dyspeptics," returned Dr. Strong. "The American stomach is the worst-abused organ in creation. Saliva is the true digestive. If people would take time to chew properly, half the dyspepsia-pill fakers would go out of business. If they'd take time to exercise properly, the other half would disappear."

"Liver pills were my regular dependence a few years ago," remarked Mr. Clyde. "Since I took up hand-ball I have n't needed them. But I suppose that half the business men in town think they could n't live without drugging themselves two or three times a week."

"Undoubtedly. Tell the average American any sort of a lie in print, about his digestion, and he'll swallow it whole, together with the drug which the lie is intended to sell. Look at the Cascaret advertising. Its tendency is to induce, not an occasional recourse to Cascarets, but a steady use of them. Any man foolish enough to follow the advice of the advertisements would form a Cascaret habit and

## THE CORNER DRUG-STORE

bring his digestion into a state of slavery. That sort of appeal has probably ruined more digestions and spoiled more tempers than any devil-dogma ever put into type.”

“Castor-oil is good enough for me,” said Grandma Sharpless emphatically.

“It’s good enough for anybody — that is to say, bad enough and nasty enough so that there is n’t much danger of its being abused. But these infernal sugar-coated candy cathartics get a hold on a man’s intestinal organization so that it can’t do its work without ’em, and, Lord knows, it can’t stand their stimulus indefinitely. Then along comes appendicitis.”

“But some of the laxative medicines advertise to prevent appendicitis,” said Mrs. Clyde.

Dr. Strong’s face was very grim. “Yes, they advertise. Commercial travelers, because of their irregular habits, are great pill-guzzlers as a class. Appendicitis is a very common complaint among them. A Pittsburgh surgeon with a large practice among traveling men has kept records, and he believes that more than fifty per cent of the appendicitis cases he treats are caused by the ‘liver-pill’ and ‘steady-cathartic’ habit. He explains his theory in this way. The man begins taking the laxative to correct his bad habits of life. Little by little he increases his dose, as the digestive mechanism

## THE HEALTH MASTER

grows less responsive to the stimulus, until presently an overdose sets his intestines churning around with a violence never intended by nature. Then, under this abnormal peristalsis, as it is called, the appendix becomes infected, and there's nothing for it but the surgeon's knife."

"Would you have people run to the doctor and pay two dollars every time their stomach got a little out of kilter?" asked Mrs. Sharpless shrewdly.

"Run to the doctor; run to the minister; run to the plumber; run anywhere so long as you run far enough and fast enough," answered Dr. Strong with a smile. "A mile a day at a good clip, or three miles of brisk walking would be the beginning of a readjustment. Less food more slowly eaten and no strong liquors would complete the cure in nine cases out of ten. The tenth case needs the doctor; not the newspaper-and-drug-store pill."

"But all patent medicines aren't bad, are they?" asked Mrs. Clyde. "Some have very good testimonials."

"Bought or wheedled. Any medicine which claims to *cure* is a fraud and a swindle."

"Don't tell me, young man!" said Grandma Sharpless. "You doctors are prejudiced against patent medicines, but we old folks have used 'em long enough to know which are good and which are bad. Now I don't claim but what the Indian

## THE CORNER DRUG-STORE

herb remedies and the 'ready reliefs' and that lot are frauds. But my family was brought up on teething powders and soothing syrups."

"Then you're fortunate," said Dr. Strong sternly, "that none of them has turned out to be an opium fiend."

The instant he said it, he saw, with sharp regret, that his shaft had sped true to the mark. The clear, dark red of a hale old age faded from Grandma Sharpless's cheeks. Mr. Clyde shot a quick glance of warning at him.

"And speaking of Indian remedies," went on the doctor glibly, "I remember as a boy —"

"Stop a minute," said Grandma Sharpless steadily. "The truth is n't going to hurt me. Or, if it does hurt, maybe it's right it should. I had a younger brother who died in a sanitarium for drug-habit when he was twenty-four. As a child he pretty nearly lived on soothing syrups; had to have them all the time, because he was such a nervous little fellow; always having earache and stomach-ache, until he was eight or nine years old. Then he got better and became a strong, active boy, and a robust man. After his college course he went to Philadelphia, and was doing well when he contracted the morphine habit — how or why, we never knew. It killed him in three years. Do you think — is it possible that the soothing syrups — I've heard

## THE HEALTH MASTER

they have morphine in them — had anything to do with his ruin?”

“Why, Mrs. Sharpless,” said the other, very gently, “I can only put it before you in this way. Here is one of the most subtle and enslaving of all drugs, morphine. It is fed to a child, in the plastic and formative years of life, regularly. What surer way could there be of planting the seeds of drug-habit? Suppose, for illustration, we substitute alcohol, which is far less dangerous. If you gave a child, from the time of his second year to his eighth, let us say, two or three drinks of whiskey every day, and that child, when grown up, developed into a drunkard, would you think it strange?”

“I’d think it strange if he did n’t.”

“Apply the same logic to opium, or its derivative, morphine. There are a dozen preparations regularly used for children, containing opium, or morphine, such as Mrs. Winslow’s ‘Soothing Syrup,’ and Kopp’s ‘Baby Friend.’ This is well known, and it is also a recognized fact that the morphine and opium habit is steadily increasing in this country. Is n’t it reasonable to infer a connection between the two? Further, some of the highest authorities believe that the use of these drugs in childhood predisposes to the drink habit also, later in life. The nerves are unsettled; they are habituated to a morbid craving, and, at a later period, that

## THE CORNER DRUG-STORE

craving is liable to return in a changed manifestation."

"But a drug-store can't sell opium or morphine except on prescription, can it?" asked Mr. Clyde.

"It can *in a patent medicine*," replied the doctor. "That's one of the ugly phases of the drug business. Yet it's possible to find honest people who believe in these dopes and even give testimonials to them."

"Some testimonials are hard to believe," said Mrs. Clyde, thankfully accepting the chance to shift the conversation to a less painful phase of the topic. "Old Mrs. Dibble in our church is convinced that she owes her health to Hall's Catarrh Cure."

Dr. Strong smiled sardonically. "That's the nostrum which offers one hundred dollars reward for any case it can't cure; and when a disgusted dupe tried to get the one hundred dollars, they said he had n't given their remedy a sufficient trial: he'd taken only twenty-odd bottles. So your friend thinks that a useless mixture of alcohol and iodide of potassium fixed her, does she?"

"Why should n't she? She had a case of catarrh. She took three bottles of the medicine, and her catarrh is all gone."

"All right. Let's extend her line of reasoning to some other cases. While old Mr. Barker, around on Halsey Street, was very ill with pneumonia last month, he fell out of bed and broke his arm."

## THE HEALTH MASTER

“In two places,” said Mrs. Sharpless. “I saw him walking up the street yesterday, all trussed up like a chicken.”

“Quite recovered from pneumonia, however. Then there was little Mrs. Bowles: she had typhoid, you remember, and at the height of the fever a strange cat got into the room and frightened her into hysterics.”

“But she got well,” said Mrs. Clyde. “They’re up in the woods now.”

“Exactly. Moral (according to Mrs. Dibble’s experience with Hall’s Catarrh Cure): for pneumonia, try a broken arm; in case of typhoid, set a cat on the patient.”

Mr. Clyde laughed. “I see,” he said. “People get well in spite of these patent medicines, rather than by virtue of them. *Post hoc, non propter hoc*, as our lawyer friends say.”

“You’ve got it. The human body keeps up a sort of drug-store of its own. As soon as disease fastens on it, it goes to work in a subtle and mysterious way, manufacturing a cure for that disease. If it’s diphtheria, the body produces antitoxin, and we give it more to help it on. If it’s jaundice, it produces a special quality of gastric juices to correct the evil conditions. In the vast majority of attacks, the body drives out the disease by its own efforts; yet, if the patient chances to have been idiot enough



## THE CORNER DRUG-STORE

to take some quack 'cure' the credit goes to that medicine."

"Or to the doctor, if it's a doctor's case," suggested Grandma Sharpless, with a twinkle of malice.

"Show me a doctor who boasts 'I can cure you,' whether by word of mouth or in print, and I'll show you a quack," returned the other warmly.

"But what is a doctor for in a sick-room, if not to cure?" asked Mrs. Clyde.

"What is a captain for on a ship?" countered Dr. Strong. "He can't cure a storm, can he? But he can guide the vessel so that she can weather it. Well, our medical captains lose a good many commands; the storm is often too severe for human skill. But they save a good many, too, by skillful handling."

"Then there is no such thing as an actual cure, in medicine?"

"Why, yes. In a sense there are several. Antitoxin may be called a cure for diphtheria. Quinine is, to some extent, a specific in malaria. And Ehrlich's famous '606' has been remarkably, though not unfailingly, successful in that terrible blood-plague, born of debauchery, which strikes the innocent through the guilty. All these remedies, however, come, not through the quack and the drug-store, but through the physician and the laboratory."

## THE HEALTH MASTER

“May not the patent medicines, also, help to guide the physical ship through the storm?” asked Mrs. Clyde, adopting the doctor’s simile.

“On to the rocks,” he replied quickly. “Look at the consumption cures. To many consumptives, alcohol is deadly. Yet a wretched concoction like Duffy’s Malt Whiskey, advertised to cure tuberculosis, flaunts its lies everywhere. And the law is powerless to check the suicidal course of the poor fools who believe and take it.”

“Why, I thought the Pure Food Law stopped all that,” said Mrs. Clyde innocently.

“The Pure Food Law! The life has been almost crushed out of it. Roosevelt whacked it over the head with his Referee Board, which granted immunity to the food poisoners, and afterward the Supreme Court and Wickersham treated it to a course of ‘legal interpretations,’ which generally signify a way to get around a good law.”

“But the patent medicines are n’t allowed to make false claims any more, as I understand it,” said Mr. Clyde.

“That applies only to the label on the bottle. So you’ll find that the words ‘alcohol,’ ‘opium,’ ‘acetanilid,’ ‘chloral,’ and other terms of poison, have sprouted forth there, in very small and inconspicuous type. But there’s a free field for the false promises on sign-boards, in the street-cars,

## THE CORNER DRUG-STORE

in the newspapers, everywhere. Look in the next drug-store window you pass and you'll see 'sure cures' exploited in terms that would make Ananias feel like an amateur."

"You make out a pretty poor character for the druggists, as a class," observed Mr. Clyde.

"Not at all. As a class, they're a decent, self-respecting, honorable lot of men."

"Then why do they stick to a bad trade?" asked Mrs. Clyde.

Dr. Strong got to his feet. "Let one of them answer," he said. "Mr. Gormley, who runs the big store in the Arcade, usually passes here about this time, and I think I see him coming now."

"They can talk all they like," said Grandma Sharpless emphatically, as the doctor walked across to the front fence, "but I wouldn't be without a bottle of cough syrup in the house."

"Nor I without my headache tablets," added Mrs. Clyde. "I'd have had to give up the bridge party yesterday but for them."

Mr. Clyde shot a sharp glance, first, at his wife, then at her mother. "Well, I'd like to see the labels on your particular brands of medicine," he remarked.

"There's nothing bad in mine," asserted Mrs. Clyde. "Mrs. Martin recommended them to me; she's been taking them for years."

## THE HEALTH MASTER

At this point Dr. Strong returned, bringing with him a slim, elderly man, whose shrewd, wide eyes peered through a pair of gold-rimmed glasses.

“So you want me to give away the secrets of my trade,” he remarked good-humoredly, after the greetings. “Well, I don’t object to relieving my mind, once in a while. So shoot, and if I can’t dodge, I’ll yell.”

“Why do you deal in patent medicines if they’re so bad?” asked Grandma Sharpless bluntly. “Is there such a big profit in them?”

“No profit, worth speaking of,” replied Mr. Gormley. “Though you’ll note that I have n’t admitted they are bad — as yet.”

“The bulk of your trade is in that class of goods, is n’t it?” queried Mr. Clyde.

“Worse luck, it is. They’ve got us through their hold on the public. And they not only force us to be their agents, but they grind us down to the very smallest profit; sometimes less than the cost of doing business.”

“But you are n’t compelled to deal in their medicines,” objected Mr. Clyde.

“Practically I am. My really profitable trade is in filling prescriptions. There I can legitimately charge, not only for the drugs, but also for my special technical skill and knowledge. But in order to maintain my prescription trade I must keep

## THE CORNER DRUG-STORE

people coming to my store. And they won't come unless I carry what they demand in the way of patent medicines."

"Then there is a legitimate demand for patent medicines?" said Mr. Clyde quickly.

"Legitimate? Hardly. It's purely an inspired demand."

"What makes it persist, then?"

"The newspapers. The patent-medicine advertisers fill the daily columns with their claims, and create a demand by the force of repeated falsehood. Do you know the universal formula for the cost of patent cures? Here it is: Drugs, 3 per cent; manufacturing plant, 7 per cent; printing ink, 90 per cent. It's a sickening business. If I could afford it, I'd break loose like that fellow McConnell in Chicago and put a placard of warning in my show window. Here's a copy of the one he displays in his drug-store."

Taking a card from his pocket, Mr. Gormley held it up for the circle to read. The inscription was: —

"Please do not ask us what *any old patent medicine* is worth, for you embarrass us, as our honest answer must be that *it is worthless*.

"If you mean to ask us at what price we sell it, that is an entirely different proposition. When sick, consult a good physician. It is the only proper course. And you will

## THE HEALTH MASTER

find it cheaper in the end than self-medication with *worthless 'patent' nostrums.*"

"Has that killed his trade in quackery?" asked Dr. Strong.

"Nothing can kill that. It has cut it down by half, though. It's a peculiar and disheartening fact that the public will believe the paid lie of a newspaper advertisement and disregard the plain truth from an expert. And see here, Dr. Strong, when you doctors get together and roast the pharmaceutical trade, just remember that it's really the newspapers and not the drug-stores that sell patent medicines."

"Are all of them so bad?" asked Mrs. Clyde.

"All that claim to *cure*. They're either frauds, appealing to the appetite by a stiff allowance of booze, like Swamp Root and Peruna, or disguised dopes, — opium, hasheesh or chloral, — masquerading as soothing syrups, cough medicines, and consumption cures; or artificial devices for giving yourself heart disease by the use of coal-tar chemicals in the headache powders and anti-pain pills."

"Well, you can't make me believe, Mr. Druggan," said Grandma Sharpless with a belligerent shake of her head, "that a patent medicine which keeps on being in demand for years, on its own merits, has n't something good in it."

## THE CORNER DRUG-STORE

“No, ma’am, I can’t,” agreed the visitor. “I would n’t want to. There is n’t any such patent medicine.”

“There’s hundreds of ’em,” contradicted the old lady, with the exaggeration of the disputant who finds the ground dropping away from underfoot.

“Not that sell on their own merits. Advertising and more advertising and still more advertising is all that does it. Let any one of them drop out of the newspapers and off the bill-boards, and the demand for it would be dead in a year.”

“Yet, as a student of business conditions,” said Mr. Clyde, “I’m inclined to side with Mrs. Sharpless and believe that any line of goods which has come down from yesterday to to-day must have some merit.”

The druggist took off his glasses, wiped them and waved them in the air, with a flourish.

And all our yesterdays have lighted fools  
The way to dusty death,

he quoted sonorously. “We think ourselves heirs to the wisdom of the ages, without stopping to consider that we’re heirs to the foolishness, also. We’re gulled by the printed lie about Doan’s Kidney Pills, just as our fathers were by the cart-tail oratory of the itinerant quack who sold the ‘Wonderful Indian Secrets of Life’ at one dollar per bottle.”

## THE HEALTH MASTER

“Well, I hesitate to admit it,” said Mrs. Clyde, with a little laugh, “but we always have a few of the old remedies about.”

“Suppose you name some of them over,” suggested the druggist.

“Usually I keep some One-Night Cough Cure in the house. That’s harmless, is n’t it?”

The druggist glanced at Dr. Strong, and they both grinned.

“It *might* be harmless,” said the druggist mildly, “if it did n’t contain both morphine and hasheesh.”

“Goodness!” said Mrs. Clyde, horrified. “How could one suppose —”

“By reading the label carefully,” interjected Dr. Strong. “Anything else?”

“Let me think. I’ve always considered Jayne’s Expectorant good for the children when they have a cold.”

“Tastes differ,” observed the druggist philosophically. “I would n’t consider opium good for *my* children inside or outside of any expectorant. Next!”

“But the names *sound* so innocent!” cried Mrs. Clyde. “I’m almost afraid to tell any more. But we always have Rexall Cholera Cure on hand.”

“Had much cholera in the house lately?” inquired the druggist, with an affectation of extreme interest.



## THE CORNER DRUG-STORE

“Of course it’s only for stomach-ache,” explained Mrs. Clyde. “It certainly does cure the pain.”

“Not cure,—drug it into unconsciousness,” amended Mr. Gormley. “The opium in it does that. Rather a heroic remedy, opium, for a little stomach-ache, don’t you think?”

“What have you got to say against Kohler’s One-Night Cough Cure that I always keep by me?” demanded Grandma Sharpless.

Mr. Gormley beamed on her in deprecatory good nature. “Who? Me? Gracious! I’ve got nothing to say against it worse than it says against itself, on its label. Morphine, chloroform, and hasheesh. What more *is* there to say?”

“How long has this house been full of assorted poisons?” asked Mr. Clyde suddenly of his wife.

“Now, Tom,” she protested. “I’ve always been careful about using them for the children. Personally, I never touch patent medicines.”

But at this her mother, smarting under their caller’s criticism of her cough syrup, turned on her.

“What do you call those headache tablets you take?”

“Those? They are n’t a patent medicine. They’re Anti-kamnia, a physician’s prescription.”

“Yes; a fine prescription they are!” said the druggist. “Did you ever read the Anti-kamnia book-

## THE HEALTH MASTER

let? For whole-souled, able-bodied, fore-and-aft, up-and-down stairs professional lying, it has got most of the patent medicines relegated to the infant class. Harmless, they say! I've seen a woman take two of those things and hardly get out of the door before they got in their fine work on her heart and over she went like a shot rabbit."

"Not dead!"

"No; but it was touch and go with her."

"What's in that; opium, too?" asked Mr. Clyde.

"No; a coal-tar chemical which puts a clamp on the heart action. One or another of the coal-tar drugs is in all the headache powders. There's a long list of deaths from them, not to mention cases of drug-habit."

"Habit?" cried Mrs. Clyde. "Do you mean I'm in danger of not being able to get along without the tablets?"

"If you take them steadily you certainly are. If you take them occasionally, you're only in danger of dropping dead one of these days."

Mr. Clyde's chin abruptly assumed a prominence which he seldom permitted it. "Well, that settles *that*," he observed; and it was entirely unnecessary for any one present to ask any amplification of the remark. Mrs. Clyde looked at her mother for sympathy — and did n't get any.

## THE CORNER DRUG-STORE

“Whenever I see a woman come into the shop,” continued the druggist, “with a whitey-blue complexion and little gray flabby wrinkles under her eyes, I know without asking what *she* wants. She’s a headache-powder fiend.”

“That queer look they have is from deterioration of the blood,” said Dr. Strong. “The acetanilid or acetphenetidin or whatever the coal-tar derivative may be, seems to kill the red corpuscles. In extreme cases of this I’ve seen blood the color of muddy water.”

“It certainly makes a fright of a woman. ‘Orangeine’ gets a lot of ’em. You’ve seen its advertisements in the street-cars. The owner of Orangeine, a Chicago man, got the habit himself: used fairly to live on the stuff, until pop! went his heart. He’s a living, or, rather a dead illustration of what his own dope will do.”

“But what are you to do for a splitting headache?” queried Mrs. Clyde, turning to Dr. Strong.

“I don’t know, unless I know what causes it,” said Dr. Strong. “Headache is n’t a disease. It’s a symptom, a danger signal. It’s the body’s way of crying for help. Drugs don’t cure a headache. They simply interrupt it.”

“What with the headache-powders breeding the drug habit, and the consumption cures and cough medicines making dope fiends, and the malt

## THE HEALTH MASTER

whiskey cures and Perunas furnishing quiet joy to the temperance trade, I sometimes wonder what we're coming to," remarked Mr. Gormley.

Mr. Clyde rubbed his chin thoughtfully. "But poor people who can't afford a doctor have no recourse but to patent medicines," said he.

"Can't afford a doctor!" exclaimed Dr. Strong. "Why, don't you know that nostrum-taking is the most expensive form of treatment? Did you ever happen to see A. B. Frost's powerful cartoon called 'Her Last Dollar'? A woman, thin, bent, and ravaged with disease, is buying, across the counter of a country store, a bottle of some kind of 'sure cure,' from the merchant, who serves her with a smile, half-pitying, half-cynical, while her two ragged children, with hunger and hope in their pinched faces, gaze wistfully at the food in the glass cases. There's the whole tragedy of a wasted life in that picture. 'Her Last Dollar!' That's what the patent medicine is after. A doctor at least *tries* to cure. But the patent medicine shark's policy is to keep the sufferer buying as long as there is a dollar left to buy with. Why, a nostrum that advertises heavily has got to sell six bottles or seven to each victim before the cost of catching that victim is defrayed. After that, the profits. Since you've brought up the matter of expense, I'll give you an instance from your own household, Clyde."

## THE CORNER DRUG-STORE

“Here! What’s this?” cried Mr. Clyde, sitting up straight. “More patent dosing?”

“One of the servants, — Maggie, the nurse. I’ve got her whole medical history and she’s a prime example of the Dupe’s Progress. She’s run the gamut of fake cures.”

“Something must have been the matter with her to start her off, though,” said Mr. Clyde.

“That’s the joke — or would be if it were n’t pathetic. She started out by having headaches. Not knowing any better, she took headache-powders.”

“One for you, Myra,” remarked Mr. Clyde to his wife, in an aside.

“Bad heart action and difficulty in breathing — the natural result — scared her into the belief that she had heart trouble. Impetus was given to this notion by an advertisement which she found in a weekly, a religious weekly (God save the mark!), advising her not to drop dead of heart disease. To avoid this awful fate, which was illustrated by a sprightly sketch of a man falling flat on the sidewalk, she was earnestly implored to try Kinsman’s heart remedy. She did so, and, of course, got worse, since the ‘remedy’ was merely a swindle. About this time Maggie’s stomach began to ‘act up,’ partly from the medicines, partly from the original trouble which caused her headaches.”

## THE HEALTH MASTER

“You have n’t told us what that was, Strong,” remarked Mr. Clyde.

“Later. Maggie now developed catarrh of the stomach, superinduced by reading one of old Dr. Hartman’s Peruna ads. She took seven bottles of Peruna, and it cheered her up quite a bit — temporarily and alcoholically.”

“Then it was *that* that I smelled on her breath. And I accused her of drinking,” said Mrs. Clyde remorsefully.

“So she had been; raw alcohol, flavored with a little caramel and doctored up with a few drugs. Toward the close of her Peruna career, her stomach became pretty sensitive. Also, as she was n’t accustomed to strong liquor, her kidneys were affected somewhat. In her daily paper she read a clarion call from Dr. Kilmer of the Swamp Root swindle (the real Dr. Kilmer quit Swamp Root to become a cancer quack, by the way), which seemed to her to diagnose her case exactly. So she ‘tanked up’ some more on that brand of intoxicant. Since she was constantly drugging herself, the natural resistance of her body was weakened, and she got a bad cold. The cough scared her almost to death; or rather, the consumption cure advertisements which she took to reading did; and she spent a few dollars on the fake factory which turns out Dr. King’s New Discovery. This proving worthless, she

## THE CORNER DRUG-STORE

switched to Piso's Cure and added the hasheesh habit to alcoholism. By this time she had acquired a fine, typical case of patent-medicine dyspepsia. That idea never occurred to her, though. She next tried Dr. Miles's Anti-Pain Pills (more acetanilid), and finally decided — having read some advertising literature on the subject — that she had cancer. And the reason she was leaving you, Mrs. Clyde, was that she had decided to go to a scoundrelly quack named Johnson who conducts a cancer institute in Kansas City, where he fleeces unfortunates out of their money on the pretense that he can cure cancer without the use of the knife."

"Can't you stop her?" asked Mrs. Clyde anxiously.

"Oh, I've stopped her! You'll find the remains of her patent medicines in the ash-barrel. I flatter myself I've fixed *her* case."

Grandma Sharpless gazed at him solemnly. "'Any doctor who claims to cure is a quack.' Quotation from Dr. Strong," she said.

"Nearly had me there," admitted he. "Fortunately I did n't use the word 'cure.' It was n't a case of cure. It was a case of correcting a stupid, disastrous little blunder in mathematics."

"Mathematics, eh?" repeated Mr. Clyde. "Have you reached the point where you treat disease by algebra, and triangulate a patient for an operation?"

## THE HEALTH MASTER

“Not quite that. But poor Maggie suffered all her troubles solely through an error in figuring by an incompetent man. A year ago she had trouble with her eyes. Instead of going to a good oculist she went to one of these stores which offer examinations free, and take it out in the price of the glasses. The examination is worth just what free things usually are worth — or less. They sold her a pair of glasses for two dollars. The glasses were figured out some fifty degrees wrong, for her error of vision, which was very slight, anyway. The nervous strain caused by the effort of the eyes to accommodate themselves to the false glasses and, later, the accumulated mass of drugs with which she’s been insulting her insides, are all that’s the matter with Maggie.”

“That is, the glasses caused the headaches, and the patent medicines the stomach derangement,” said Mr. Clyde.

“And the general break up, though the glasses may have started both before the nostrums ever got in their evil work. Nowadays, the wise doctor, having an obscure stomach trouble to deal with, in the absence of other explanation, looks to the eyes. Eye-strain has a most potent and far-reaching influence on digestion. I know of one case of chronic dyspepsia, of a year’s standing, completely cured by a change of eyeglasses.”



## THE CORNER DRUG-STORE

“As a financial proposition,” said Mr. Gormley, “your nurse must have come out at the wrong end of the horn.”

“Decidedly,” confirmed the doctor. “She spent on patent medicines about forty dollars. The cancer quack would have got at least a hundred dollars out of her, not counting her railroad fare. Two hundred dollars would be a fair estimate of her little health-excursion among the quacks. Any good physician would have sent her to an oculist, who would have fitted proper glasses and saved all that expense and drugging. The entire bill for doctor, oculist, and glasses might have been twenty-five dollars. Yet they defend patent medicines on the ground that they’re the ‘poor man’s doctor.’”

Mr. Gormley rose. “Poor man’s undertaker, rather,” he amended. “Well, having sufficiently blackguarded my own business, I think I’ll go. Here’s the whole thing summed up, as I see it. It pays to go to the doctor first and the druggist afterward; not to the druggist first and the doctor afterward.”

Dr. Strong walked over to the gate with him. On his return Mrs. Clyde remarked:

“What an interesting, thoughtful man. Are most druggists like that?”

“They’re not all philosophers of the trade, like Gormley,” said Dr. Strong, “but they have to be

## THE HEALTH MASTER

pretty intelligent before they can pass the Pharmaceutical Board in this state, and put out their colored lights.”

“I’ve often meant to ask what the green and red lights in front of a drug-store stand for,” said Mrs. Clyde. “What is their derivation?”

“Green is the official color of medical science,” explained the doctor. “The green flag, you know, indicates the hospital corps in war-time; and the degree of M.D. is signalized by a green hood in academic functions.”

“And the red globe on the other side of the store: what does that mean?”

“Danger,” replied Dr. Strong grimly.

## V

### THE MAGIC LENS

“No good fairy had ever bestowed such a gift as this magic lens,” said Dr. Strong, whisking Bettina up from her seat by the window and setting her on his knee. “It was most marvelously and delicately made, and furnished with a lightning-quick intelligence of its own. Everything that went on around it, it reported to its fortunate possessor as swiftly as thought flies through that lively little brain of yours. It earned its owner’s livelihood for him; it gave him three fourths of his enjoyments and amusements; it laid before him the wonderful things done and being done all over the world; it guided all his life. And all that it required was a little reasonable care, and such consideration as a man would show to the horse that worked for him.”

“At the beginning you said it was n’t a fairy-tale,” accused Bettina, with the gravity which five years considers befitting such an occasion.

“Wait. Because the owner of the magic lens found that it obeyed all his orders so readily and faithfully, he began to impose on it. He made it work very hard when it was tired. He set tasks for

## {THE HEALTH MASTER}

it to perform under very difficult conditions. At times when it should have been resting, he compelled it to minister to his amusements. When it complained, he made light of its trouble.”

“Could it speak?” inquired the little auditor.

“At least it had a way of making known its wants. In everything which concerned itself it was keenly intelligent, and knew what was good and bad for it, as well as what was good and bad for its owner.”

“Could n’t it stop working for him if he was so bad to it?”

“Only as an extreme measure. But presently, in this case, it threatened to stop. So the owner took it to a cheap and poor repair-shop, where the repairer put a little oil in it to make it go on working. For a time it went on. Then, one morning, the owner woke up and cried out with a terrible fear. For the magic light in the magic lens was gone. So for that foolish man there was no work to do nor play to enjoy. The world was blotted out for him. He could not know what was going on about him, except by hearsay. No more was the sky blue for him, or the trees green, or the flowers bright; and the faces of his friends meant nothing. He had thrown away the most beautiful and wonderful of all gifts. Because it is a gift bestowed on nearly all of us, most of us forgot the wonder and the beauty

## THE MAGIC LENS

of it. So, Honorable Miss Twinkles, do you beware how you treat the magic lens which is given to you.”

“To me?” cried the child; and then, with a little squeal of comprehension: “Oh, I know! My eyes. That’s the magic lens. Is n’t it?”

“What’s that about Bettykin’s eyes?” asked Mr. Clyde, who had come in quietly, and had heard the finish of the allegory.

“I’ve been examining them,” explained Dr. Strong, “and the story was reward of merit for her going through with it like a little soldier.”

“Examining her eyes? Any particular reason?” asked the father anxiously.

“Very particular. Mrs. Clyde wishes to send her to kindergarten for a year before she enters the public school. No child ought to begin school without a thorough test of vision.”

“What did the test show in Bettykin’s case?”

“Nothing except the defects of heredity.”

“Heredity? My sight is pretty good; and Mrs. Clyde’s is still better.”

“You two are not the Cherub’s only ancestors, however,” smiled the physician. “And you can hardly expect one or two generations to recast as delicate a bit of mechanism as the eye, which has been built up through millions of years of slow development. However, despite the natural deficiencies, there’s no reason in Betty why she should n’t start

## THE HEALTH MASTER

in at kindergarten next term, provided there is n't any in the kindergarten itself."

Mr. Clyde studied the non-committal face of his "Chinese physician," as he was given to calling Dr. Strong since the latter had undertaken to safeguard the health of his household on the Oriental basis of being paid to keep the family well and sound. "Something is wrong with the school," he decided.

"Read what it says of itself in that first paragraph," replied Dr. Strong, handing him a rather pretentious little booklet.

In the prospectus of their "new and scientific kindergarten," the Misses Sarsfield warmly congratulated themselves and their prospective pupils, primarily, upon the physical advantages of their school building which included a large work-and-play room, "with generous window space on all sides, and finished throughout in pure, glazed white." This description the head of the Clyde household read over twice; then he stepped to the door to intercept Mrs. Clyde's mother who was passing by.

"Here, Grandma," said he. "Our Chinese tyrant had diagnosed something wrong with that first page. Do you discover any kink in it?"

"Not I," said Mrs. Sharpless, after reading it. "Nor in the place itself. I called there yesterday.

## THE MAGIC LENS)

It is a beautiful room; everything as shiny and clean as a pin."

"Yesterday was cloudy," observed the Health Master.

"It was. Yet there was n't a corner of the place that was n't flooded with light," declared Mrs. Sharpless.

"And on a clear day, with the sun pouring in from all sides and being flashed back from those shiny, white walls, the unfortunate inmates would be absolutely dazzled."

"Do you mean to say that God's pure sunlight can hurt any one?" challenged Mrs. Sharpless, who was rather given to citing the Deity as support for her own side of any question.

"Did you ever hear of snow-blindness?" countered the physician.

"I've seen it in the North," said Mr. Clyde. "It's not a pleasant thing to see."

"Glazed white walls would give a very fair imitation of snow-glare. Too much light is as bad as too little. Those walls should be tinted."

"Yet it says here," said Mr. Clyde, referring to his circular, "that the [Misses Sarsfield will conduct their institution on the most improved Froebelian principles."

"Froebel was a great man and a wise one," said Dr. Strong. "His kindergarten system has revolu-

## THE HEALTH MASTER

tionized all teaching. But he lived before the age of hygienic knowledge. I suppose that no other man has wrought so much disaster to the human eye as he."

"That's a pretty broad statement, Strong," objected Mr. Clyde.

"Is it? Look at the evidence. North Germany is the place where Froebel first developed his system. Seventy-five per cent of the population are defective of vision. Even the American children of North German immigrants show a distinct excess of eye defects. You've seen the comic pictures representing Boston children as wearing huge goggles?"

"Are you making an argument out of a funny-paper joke?" queried Grandma Sharpless.

"Why not? It would n't be a joke if it had n't some foundation in fact. The kindergarten system got its start in America in Boston. Boston has the worst eyesight of any American city; impaired vision has even become hereditary there. To return to Germany: if you want a shock, look up the records of suicides among school-children there."

"But surely that has no connection with the eyes."

"Surely it has," controverted Dr. Strong. "The eye is the most nervous of all the organs; and nothing will break down the nervous system in general



## THE MAGIC LENS

more swiftly and surely than eye-strain. Even in this country we are raising up a generation of neurasthenic youngsters, largely from neglect of their eyes."

"Still, we've got to educate our children," said Mr. Clyde.

"And we've got to take the utmost precautions lest the education cost more than it is worth, in acquired defects."

"For my part," announced Grandma Sharpless, "I believe in early schooling and in children learning to be useful. At the Sarsfield school there were little girls no older than Bettina, who were doing needlework beautifully; fine needlework at that."

"Fine needlework!" exploded Dr. Strong in a tone which Grandma Sharpless afterwards described as "damnless swearing." "That's enough! See here, Clyde. Betty goes to that kindergarten only over my dead job."

"Oh, well," said Mr. Clyde, amazed at the quite unwonted excitement which the other exhibited, "if you're dealing in ultimatums, I'll drop out and leave the stricken field to Mrs. Clyde. This kindergarten scheme is hers. Wait. I'll bring her. I think she just came in."

"What am I to fight with you about, Dr. Strong?" asked Mrs. Clyde, appearing at the door,

## THE HEALTH MASTER

a vision of trim prettiness in her furs and veil.  
“Tom did n’t tell me the *casus belli*.”

“Nobody in this house,” said Dr. Strong appealing to her, “seems to deem the human eye entitled to the slightest consideration. You’ve never worn glasses; therefore you must have respected your own eyesight enough to —”

He stopped abruptly and scowled into Mrs. Clyde’s smiling face.

“Well! what’s the matter?” she demanded.  
“You look as if you were going to bite.”

“What are you looking cross-eyed for?” the Health Master shot at her.

“I’m not! Oh, it’s this veil, I suppose.” She lifted the heavy polka-dotted screen and tucked it over her hat. “There, that’s more comfortable!”

“Is it!” said the physician with an emphasis of sardonicism. “You surprise me by admitting that much. How long have you been wearing that instrument of torture?”

“Oh, two hours. Perhaps three. But, Dr. Strong, it does n’t hurt my eyes at all.”

“Nor your head?”

“I *have* got a little headache,” she confessed.

“To think that a supposedly intelligent woman who has reached the age of — of —”

“Thirty-eight,” said she, laughing. “I’m not ashamed of it.”

## THE MAGIC LENS

“—Thirty-eight, without having to wear glasses, should deliberately abuse her hard-working vision by distorting it! See here,” he interrupted himself, “it’s quite evident that I have n’t been living up to the terms of my employment. One of these evenings we’re going to have in this household a short but sharp lecture and symposium on eyes. I’ll give the lecture; and I suspect that this family will furnish the symposium — of horrible examples. Where’s Julia? As she’s the family Committee on School Conditions, I expect to get some material from her, too. Meantime, Mrs. Clyde, no kindergarten for Bettykin, if you please. Or, in any case, not that kindergarten.”

No further ocular demonstrations were made by Dr. Strong for several days. Then, one evening, he came into the library where the whole family was sitting. Grandma Sharpless, in the old-fashioned rocker, next a stand from which an old-fashioned student-lamp dispensed its benign rays, was holding up, with some degree of effort, a rather heavy book to the line of her vision. Opposite her a soft easychair contained Robin, other-wise Bobs, involuted like a currant-worm after a dose of Paris green, and imaginatively treading, with the feet of enchantment, virgin expanses of forest in the wake of Mr. Stewart White.

Julia, alias “Junkum,” his twin, was struggling

## THE HEALTH MASTER

against the demon of ill chance as embodied in a game of solitaire, far over in a dim corner. Geography enchained the mind of eight-year-old Charles, also his eyes, and apparently his nose, which was stuck far down into the mapped page. Near him his father, with chin doubled down over a stiff collar, was internally begging leave to differ with the editorial opinions of his favorite paper; while Mrs. Clyde, under the direct glare of a side-wall electric cluster, unshaded, was perusing a glazed-paper magazine, which threw upon her face a strong reflected light. Before the fire Bettykin was retailing to her most intelligent doll the allegory of the Magic Lens.

Enter, upon this scene of domestic peace, the spirit of devastation in the person of the Health Master.

“The horrible examples being now on exhibit,” he remarked from the doorway, “our symposium on eyes will begin.”

“He says we’re a hor’ble example, Susan Nipper,” said Bettina confidentially, to her doll.

“No, I apologize, Bettykin,” returned the doctor. “You’re the only two sensible people in the room.”

Julia promptly rose, lifted the stand with her cards on it, carried it to the center of the library, and planted it so that the central light fell across it from a little behind her.

## THE MAGIC LENS

“One recruit to the side of common sense,” observed the physician. “Next!”

“What’s wrong with me?” demanded Mr. Clyde, looking up. “Newspaper print?”

“Newspaper print is an unavoidable evil, and by no means the worst example of Gutenberg’s art. No; the trouble with you is that your neck is so scrunched down into a tight collar as to shut off a proper blood supply from your head. Don’t your eyes feel bungy?”

“A little. What am I going to do? I can’t sit around after dinner with no collar on.”

“Sit up straight, then; stick your neck up out of your collar and give it play. Emulate the attentive turtle! And you, Bobs, stop imitating an anchovy. Uncurl! *Uncurl!!*”

With a sigh, Robin straightened himself out. “I was so comfortable,” he complained.

“No, you were n’t. You were only absorbed. The veins on your temples are fairly bulging. You might as well try to read standing on your head. Get a straight-backed chair, and you’re all right. I’m glad to see that you follow Grandma Sharpless’s good example in reading by a student-lamp.”

“That’s my own lamp,” said Mrs. Sharpless. “Seventy years has at least taught me how to read.”

“How, but not what,” answered the Health Master. “That’s a bad book you’re reading.”

## THE HEALTH MASTER

Grandma Sharpless achieved the proud athletic feat of bounding from her chair without the perceptible movement of a muscle.

“Young man!” she exclaimed in a shaking voice, “do you know what book that is?”

“I don’t care what book —”

“It is the Bible.”

“Is it? Well, Heaven inspired the writer, but not the printer. Text such as that ought to be prohibited by law. Is n’t there a passage in that Bible, ‘Having eyes, ye see not?’”

“Yes, there is,” snapped Mrs. Sharpless. “And my eyes have been seeing and seeing straight for a good many more years than yours.”

“The more credit to them and the less to you, if you’ve maltreated them with such sight-murdering print as that. Have n’t you another Bible?”

Grandma Sharpless sat down again. “I have another,” she said, “with large print; but it’s so heavy.”

“Prescription: one reading-stand. Now, Mrs. Clyde.”

The mother of the family looked up from her magazine with a smile.

“You can’t say that I have n’t large print or a good light,” she said.

“The print is good, but the paper bad,” said the Health Master. “Bad, that is, as you are holding

## THE MAGIC LENS

it under a full, unqualified electric light. In reading from glazed paper, which reflects like a mirror, you should use a very modified light. In fact, I blame myself for not having had all the electric globes frosted long since. Now, I've kept the worst offender for the last."

Charley detached his nose from his geography and looked up. "That's me, I suppose," he remarked pessimistically and ungrammatically. "I'm always coming in for something special. But I can't make anything out of these old maps without digging my face down into 'em."

"That's a true bill against the book concern which turns out such a book, and the school board which permits its use. Charley, do you know why Manny is n't playing football this year?"

"Manny" was the oldest son of the family, then away at school.

"Mother wanted him not to, I suppose," said the boy.

"No," said Mrs. Clyde. "Dr. Strong persuaded me that the development he would get out of the game would be worth the risk."

"It was his eyes," said the Health Master. "He is wearing glasses this year and will probably wear them next. After that I hope he can stop them. But his trouble is that he — or rather his teachers — abused his eyes with just such outrageous demands

## THE HEALTH MASTER

as that geography of yours. And while the eye responded then, it is demanding payment now."

"But a kid's got to study, has n't he? Else he won't keep up," put in Bobs, much interested.

"Not at the expense of the most important of his senses," returned the Health Master. "And never at night, at Charley's age, or even yours, Bobs."

"Then he gets dropped from his classes," objected Bobs.

"The more blame to his classes. Early learning is much too expensive at the cost of eye-strain and consequent nerve-strain. If we force a student in the early years to make too great demands on his eyes, the chances are that he will develop some eye or nervous trouble at sixteen or seventeen and lose far more time than he has gained before, not reckoning the disastrous physical effects."

"But if other children go ahead, ours must," said Mrs. Clyde.

"Perhaps the others who go ahead now won't keep ahead later. There is a sentence in Wood and Woodruff's textbook on the eye<sup>1</sup> which every public-school teacher and every parent should learn by heart. It runs like this: 'That child will be happier and a better citizen as well as a more success-

<sup>1</sup> *Commoner Diseases of the Eye*, by Casey A. Wood and Thomas A. Woodruff, pp. 418, 419.



## THE MAGIC LENS

ful man of affairs, who develops into a fairly healthy, though imperfectly schooled animal at twenty, than if he becomes a learned, neurasthenic asthenope at the same age.”

“Antelope?” put in Bettina, who was getting weary of her exclusion from the topic. “I’ve got a picture of that. It’s a little deer.”

“So are you, Toddles,” cried the doctor, seizing upon her with one hand and Susan Nipper with the other, and setting one on each shoulder, “and we’re going to keep those very bright twinklers of yours just as fit as possible, both to see and be seen.”

“But what of Charley and the twins?” asked Mr. Clyde.

“Everything right, so far. They’re healthy young animals and can meet the ordinary demands of school life. But no more study at night, for some years, for Charley; and no more, ever, of fine-printed maps. Some day, Charley, you may go to the Orinoco. It’s a good deal more desirable that you should be able to see what there is to be seen there, then, than that you should learn, now, the name of every infinitesimally designated town on its banks.”

“In my childhood,” observed Mrs. Sharpless, with the finality proper to that classic introductory phrase, “we thought more of our brains than our eyes.”

## THE HEALTH MASTER

“An inverted principle. The brain can think for itself. The eye can only complain, and not always very clearly in the case of a child. Moreover, Mrs. Sharpless, in your school-days the eye was n't under half the strain that it is in our modern, print-crowded world. The fact is, we've made a tremendous leap forward, and radically changed a habit and practice built up through hundreds and thousands of years, and Nature is struggling against great difficulties to catch up with us.”

“I don't understand what you are getting at,” said Mrs. Clyde, letting her magazine drop.

“Have you tried walking on all fours lately?” inquired the physician.

“Not for a number of years.”

“Presumably you would find it awkward. Yet if, through some pressure of necessity, the human race should have to return to the quadrupedal method, the alteration in life would be less radical than we have imposed upon our vision in the last few generations.”

“Sounds like flat nonsense to me,” said the downright Clyde. “We see just as all our ancestors saw.”

“Think again. Our ancestors, back a very few generations, were an outdoor race living in a world of wide horizons. Their eyes could range over far distances, unchecked, instead of being hemmed in most of the time by four walls. They were far-

## THE MAGIC LENS

sighted. Indeed, their survival depended upon their being far-sighted; like the animals which they killed or which killed them, according as the human or the beast had the best eyes. Nowadays, in order to live we must read and write. That is, the primal demand upon the eye is that it shall see keenly near at hand instead of far off. The whole hereditary training of the organ has been inverted, as if a mountaineer should be set to diving for pearls; and the poor thing has n't had time to adjust itself yet. We employ our vision for close work ten times as much as we did a hundred years ago and ten thousand times as much as we did ten thousand years ago. But the influence of those ten thousand years is still strong upon us, and the human child is born with the eye of a savage or an animal."

"What kind of an animal's eyes have I got?" demanded Bettina. "A antelope's?"

"Almost as far-sighted," returned the Health Master, wriggling out from under her and catching her expertly as she fell. "And how do you think an antelope would be doing fine needlework in a kindergarten?"

"But, Strong, few of us go blind," said Mr. Clyde.

"And of those who do, nearly half are needlessly so. That we are n't all groping, sightless, about the earth is due to the marvelous adaptability of our eyes. And it is exactly upon that adaptability that

## THE HEALTH MASTER

we are so prone to impose; working a willing horse to death. In the young the muscles of accommodation, whereby the vision is focused, are almost incredibly powerful; far more so than in the adult. The Cherub, here, could force her vision to almost any kind of work and the eye would not complain much — at this time. But later on the effects would be manifest. Therefore we have to watch the eye very closely until it begins to grow old, which is at about twelve years or so. In the adult the eye very readily lets its owner know if anything is wrong. Only fools disregard that warning. But in the developing years we must see to it that those muscles, set to the task of overcoming generations of custom, do not overwork and upset the whole nervous organization. Sometimes glasses are necessary; usually, only care.”

“In a few generations we’ll all have four eyes, won’t we?” asked Bobs, making a pair of mock spectacles with his circled fingers and thumbs.

“Oh, let’s hope not. The cartoonists of prophecy always give the future man spectacles. But I believe that the tendency will be the other way, and that, by evolution to meet new conditions, the eye will fit itself for its work, unaided, in time. Meantime, we have to pay the penalty of the change. That’s a small price for living in this wonderful century.”

## THE MAGIC LENS

“You say that half the blind are needlessly so,” said Mrs. Clyde. “Is that from preventable disease?”

“About forty per cent, of the wholly blind. But the half-blind and the nervously wrecked victims of eye-strain owe their woes generally to sheer carelessness and neglect. By the way, eye-strain itself may cause very serious forms of disease, such as obstinate and dangerous forms of indigestion, insomnia, or even St. Vitus’s dance and epilepsy.”

“But you’re not telling us anything about eye diseases, Dr. Strong,” said Julia.

“There speaks our Committee on School Conditions, filled full of information,” said the Health Master with a smile. “Junkum has made an important discovery, and made it in time. She has found that two children recently transferred from Number 14 have red eyes.”

“Maybe they’ve been crying,” suggested Bettykin.

“They were when I saw them, acute Miss Twinkles, although they did n’t mean it at all. One was crying out of one eye, and one out of the other, which gave them a very curious, absurd, and interesting appearance. They had each a developing case of pink-eye.”

“Horses have pink-eye, not people,” remarked Grandma Sharpless.

## THE HEALTH MASTER

“To be more accurate, then, conjunctivitis. People have that; a great many people, once it gets started. It looks very bad and dangerous; but it is n’t if properly cared for. Only, it’s quite contagious. Therefore the Committee on Schools, with myself as acting executive, accomplished the temporary removal of those children from school.”

“And then,” the Committee joyously took up the tale, “we went out and trailed the pink-eye.”

“We did. We trailed it to its lair in School Number 14, and there we found one of the most dangerous creatures which civilization still allows to exist.”

“In the school?” said Bettykin. “Oo-oo! What was it?”

“It was a Rollertowl,” replied the doctor impressively and in a sonorous voice.

“I never heard of it,” said the Cherub, awe-struck. “What is it like?”

“He means a roller-towel, goosie,” explained Julia. “A towel on a roller, that everybody wipes their hands and faces on.”

“Exactly. And because everybody uses it, any contagious disease that anybody has, everybody is liable to catch. I’d as soon put a rattlesnake in a school as a roller-towel. In this case, half the grade where it was had conjunctivitis. But that is n’t the worst. There was one case of trachoma

## THE MAGIC LENS

in the grade; a poor little Italian whose parents ignorantly sent her to an optician instead of an oculist. The optician treated her for an ordinary inflammation, and now she will lose the sight of one eye. Meantime, if any of the others have been infected by her, through that roller-towel, there will be trouble, for trachoma is a serious disease."

"Did you throw out the roller-towel?" asked Charley with a hopeful eye to a fray.

"No. We got thrown out ourselves, did n't we, Junkum?"

"Pretty near," corroborated Julia. "The principal told Dr. Strong that he guessed he could run his school himself and he did n't need any interference by — by — what did he call us, Dr. Strong?"

"Interlopers. No, Cherub, an interloper is no relation to an antelope. It was four days ago that we left that principal and went out and whistled for the Fool-killer. Yesterday, the principal came down with a rose-pink eye of his own; the Health Officer met him and ordered him into quarantine, and the terrible and ferocious Rollertowl is now writhing in its death-agonies on the ash-heap."

"What about other diseases?" asked Mrs. Clyde after a pause.

"Nothing from me. The eye will report them itself quick enough. And as soon as your eye tells you that anything is the matter with it, you tell

## THE HEALTH MASTER

the oculist, and you'll probably get along all right, as far as diseases go. It is not diseases that I have to worry about, as your Chinese-plan physician, so much as it is to see that you give your vision a fair chance. Let's see. Charley, you're the Committee on Air, are n't you? Could you take on a little more work?"

"Try me," said the boy promptly.

"All right; we'll make you the Committee on Air and Light, hereafter, with power of protest and report whenever you see your mother going out in a polka-dotted, cross-eyed veil, or your grandmother reading a Bible that needs burning worse than any heretic ever did, or any of the others working or playing without sufficient illumination. Here endeth this lecture, with a final word. This is it: —

"The eye is the most nervous of all the body's organs. Except in early childhood, when it has the recklessness and overconfidence of unbounded strength, it complains promptly and sharply of ill-usage. Now, there are a few hundred rules about when and how to use the eyes and when and how not to use them. I'm not going to burden you with those. All I'm going to advise you is that when your eyes burn, smart, itch, or feel strained, there's some reason for it, and you should obey the warning and stop urging them to work against their



## THE MAGIC LENS

protest. In fact, I might sum it all up in a motto which I think I'll hang here in the library — a terse old English slang phrase.”

“What is it?” asked Mr. Clyde.

““Mind your eye,”” replied the Health Master.

## VI

### THE RE-MADE LADY

“OF all unfortunate times!” lamented Mrs. Clyde, her piquant face twisted to an expression of comic despair. “Why could n’t he have given us a little more notice?”

Impatiently she tossed aside the telegram which announced that her husband’s old friend, Oren Taylor, the artist, would arrive at seven o’clock that evening.

“Don’t let it bother you, dear,” said Clyde. “I’ll take him to the club for dinner.”

“You can’t. Have you forgotten that I’ve invited Louise Ennis for her quarterly — well — visitation?”

Clyde whistled. “That’s rather a poser. What business have I got to have a cousin like Louise, anyway!”

Upon this disloyal observation Dr. Strong walked into the library. He was a very different Dr. Strong from the nerve-shaken wanderer who had dropped from nowhere into the Clyde household a year previous as its physician on the Chinese plan of being employed to keep the family well. The pain-

## THE RE-MADE LADY

ful lines of the face were smoothed out. There was a deep light of content, the content of the man who has found his place and filled it, in the level eyes; and about the grave and controlled set of the mouth a sort of sensitive buoyancy of expression. The flesh had hardened and the spirit softened in him.

“Did you hear that, Strong?” inquired Mr. Clyde, turning to him.

“I have trained ears,” answered Dr. Strong solemnly. “They’re absolutely impervious to any speech not intended for them.”

“Open them to this: Louise Ennis is invited for dinner to-night. So is my old friend Oren Taylor, who wires to say that he’s passing through town.”

“Is that Taylor, the artist of ‘The First Parting’? I shall enjoy meeting him.”

“Well, you won’t enjoy meeting Cousin Louise,” declared Mr. Clyde. “We ask her about four times a year, out of family piety. You’ve been lucky to escape her thus far.”

“Rather a painful old party, your cousin?” inquired the physician, smilingly, of Clyde.

“Old? Twenty-two,” said Mrs. Clyde. “But she looks fifty and feels a hundred.”

“Allowing for feminine exaggeration,” amended Clyde.

“But what’s so wrong with her?” demanded the physician.

## THE HEALTH MASTER

"Nerves," said Mrs. Clyde.

"Stomach," said Mr. Clyde.

"Headaches," said Mrs. Clyde.

"Toe-aches," said Mr. Clyde.

"Too much money," said Mrs. Clyde.

"Too much ego," said Mr. Clyde.

"Dyspepsia."

"Hypochondria."

"Chronic inertia."

"Set it to music," suggested Dr. Strong, "and sing it as a duet of disease, from ablepsy to zymosis, inclusively. I shall be immensely interested to observe this prodigy of ills."

"You'll have plenty of opportunity," said Mrs. Clyde rather maliciously. "You're to sit next to her at dinner to-night."

"Then put Bettykin on the other side of me," he returned. "With that combination of elf, tyrant, and angel close at hand, I can turn for relief from the grave to the cradle."

"Indeed you cannot. Louise can't endure children. She says they get on her nerves. *My* children!"

"Now you *have* put the finishing touch to your character sketch," observed Dr. Strong. "A woman of child-bearing age who can't endure children — well, she is pretty far awry."

"Yet I can remember Louise when she was a

## THE RE-MADE LADY

sweet, attractive young girl," sighed Mrs. Clyde. "That was before her mother died, and left her to the care of a father too busy making money to do anything for his only child but spend it on her."

"You're talking about Lou Ennis, I know," said Grandma Sharpless, who had entered in time to hear the closing words.

"Yes," said Dr. Strong. "What is our expert diagnostician's opinion of the case? You know I always defer to you, ma'am, on any problem that's under the surface of things."

"None of your soft sawder, young man!" said the old lady, her shrewd, gray eyes twinkling from her shrewd, pink face. "My opinion of Louise Ennis? I'll give it to you in two words. Just spoiled."

"Taking my warning as I find it," remarked the physician, rising, "I shall now retire to put on some chain armor under my evening coat, in case the Terrible Cousin attempts to stab me with an oyster-fork."

The dinner was not, as Mrs. Clyde was forced to admit afterward, by any means the dismal function which she had anticipated. Oren Taylor, an easy, discursive, humorous talker, set the pace and was ably seconded by Grandma Sharpless, whose knack of incisive and pointed comment served to spur him to his best. Dr. Strong, who said little, at-

## THE HEALTH MASTER

tempted to draw Miss Ennis into the current of talk, and was rewarded with an occasional flash of rather acid wit, which caused the artist to look across the table curiously at the girl. So far as he could do so without rudeness, the physician studied his neighbor.

He saw a tall, amply-built girl, with a slackened frame whose muscles had forgotten how to play their part properly in holding the structure firm. Her face was flaccid. Under the large but dull eyes, there was a bloodless puffiness. Discontent sat enthroned at the corners of the sensitive mouth. A faint, reddish eruption disfigured her chin. Her two strong assets, beautifully even teeth and a wealth of soft, fine hair, failed wholly to save her from being a flatly repellent woman. Dr. Strong noted further that her hands were incessantly uneasy, and that she ate little and without interest. Also she seemed, in a sullen way, shy. Yet, despite all of these drawbacks, there was a pathetic suggestion of inherent fineness about her; of qualities become decadent through disuse; a charm that should have been, thwarted and perverted by a slovenly habit of life. Dr. Strong set her down as a woman at war with herself, and therefore with her world.

After dinner Mr. and Mrs. Clyde slipped away to see the children. The artist followed Dr. Strong, to whom he had taken a liking, as most men did,

## THE RE-MADE LADY

into the small lounging-room, where he lighted a cigar.

“Too bad about that Miss Ennis, is n’t it?” said Taylor abruptly.

His companion looked at him interrogatively.

“Such a mess,” he continued. “Such a ruin. Yet so much left that is n’t ruined. That face would be worth a lot to me for the ‘Poet’s Cycle of the Months’ that I’m painting now. What a *November* she’d make; ‘November, the withered mourner of glories dead and gone.’ Only I suppose she’d resent being asked to sit.”

“Illusions are the last assets that a woman loses,” agreed Dr. Strong.

“To think,” pursued the painter, “of what her Maker meant her to be, and of how she has belied it! She’s essentially and fundamentally a beautiful woman; that is why I want her for a model.”

“In the structure of her face, perhaps —”

“Yes; and all through. Look at the set of her shoulders, and the lines of her when she walks. Nothing jerry-built about her! She’s got the contours of a goddess and the finish of a mud-pie. It’s maddening.”

“More maddening from the physician’s point of view than from the artist’s. For the physician knows how needless it all is.”

“Is she your patient?”

## THE HEALTH MASTER

“If she were I’d be ashamed to admit it. Give me military authority and a year’s time and if I could n’t fix her so that she’d be proud to pose for your picture — Good Heavens!”

From behind the drapery of the passageway appeared Louise Ennis. She took two steps toward the two men and threw out her hands in an appeal which was almost grotesque.

“Is it true?” she cried, turning from one to the other. “Tell me, is it really true?”

“My dear young lady,” groaned Taylor, “what can I say to palliate my unpard —”

“Never mind that! I don’t care. I don’t care anything about it. It’s my own fault. I stopped and listened. I could n’t help it. It means so much to me. You can’t know. No man can understand. Is it true that I — that my face —”

Oren Taylor was an artist in more than his art: he possessed the rare sense of the fit thing to do and say.

“It is true,” he answered quietly, “that I have seen few faces more justly and beautifully modeled than yours.”

“And you,” she said, whirling upon Dr. Strong. “Can you do what you said? Can you make me good-looking?”

“Not I. But you yourself can.”

“Oh, how? What must I do? D—d—don’t



## THE RE-MADE LADY

think me a fool!" She was half-sobbing now. "It may be silly to long so bitterly to be beautiful. But I'd give anything short of life for it."

"Not silly at all," returned Dr. Strong emphatically. "On the contrary, that desire is rooted in the profoundest depths of sex."

"And is the best excuse for art as a profession," said the painter, smiling.

"Only tell me what to do," she besought.

"Gently," said Dr. Strong. "It can't be done in a day. And it will be a costly process."

"That does n't matter. If money is all —"

"It is n't all. It's only a drop in the bucket. It will cost you dear in comfort, in indulgence, in ease, in enjoyment, in habit —"

"I'll obey like a child." Again her hands went tremulously out to him; then she covered her face with them and burst into the tears of nervous exhaustion.

"This is no place for me," said the artist, and was about to escape by the door, when Mrs. Clyde blocked his departure.

"Ah, you are in here," she said gayly. "I'd been wondering — Why, what's the matter? What is it?"

"There has been an unfortunate blunder," said Dr. Strong quickly. "I said some foolish things which Miss Ennis overheard —"

## THE HEALTH MASTER

“No,” interrupted the painter. “The fault was mine —” And in the same breath Louise Ennis cried: —

“I did n’t overhear! I listened. I eavesdropped.”

“Are you quite mad, all of you?” demanded the hostess. “Won’t somebody tell me what has happened?”

“It’s true,” said the girl wildly; “every word they said. I *am* a mess.”

Mrs. Clyde’s arms went around the girl. Sex-loyalty raised its war signal flaring in her cheeks.

“*Who* said that?” she demanded, in a tone of which Dr. Strong observed afterward, “I never before heard a woman roar under her breath.”

“Never mind who said it,” retorted the girl. “It’s true anyway. It was n’t meant to hurt me. It did n’t hurt me. He is going to cure me; Dr. Strong is.”

“Cure you, Louise? Of what?”

“Of ugliness. Of hideousness. Of being a mess.”

“But, my dear,” said the older woman softly, “you must n’t take it to heart so, the idle word of some one who does n’t know you at all.”

“You can’t understand,” retorted the other passionately. “You’ve always been pretty!”

“A compliment straight from the heart,” murmured the painter.

## THE RE-MADE LADY

The color came into Mrs. Clyde's smooth cheek again. "What have you promised her, Dr. Strong?" she asked.

"Nothing. I have simply followed Mr. Taylor's lead. His is the artist eye that can see beauty beneath disguises. He has told Miss Ennis that she was meant to be a beautiful woman. I have told her that she can be what she was meant to be if she wills, and wills hard enough."

"And you will take charge of her case?" asked Mrs. Clyde.

"That, of course, depends upon you and Mr. Clyde. If you will include Miss Ennis in the family, my responsibilities will automatically extend to her."

"Most certainly," said Mrs. Clyde. "And now, Mr. Taylor," she added, answering a look of appeal from that uncomfortable gentleman, "come and see the sketches. I really believe they are Whistler's."

As they left, Dr. Strong looked down at Louise Ennis with a smile.

"At present I prescribe a little cold water for those eyes," said he. "And then some general conversation in the drawing-room. Come here tomorrow at four."

"No," said she. "I want to begin at once."

"So as to profit by the impetus of the first en-

## THE HEALTH MASTER

thusiasm? Very well. How did you come here this evening?"

"In my limousine."

"Sell it."

"Sell my new car? At this time of year?"

"Store it, then."

"And go about on street-cars, I suppose?"

"Not at all. Walk."

"But when it rains?"

"Run."

Eagerness died out of Louise Ennis's face. "Oh, I know," she said pettishly. "It's that old, old exercise treatment. Well, I've tried that, and if you think —"

She stopped in surprise, for Dr. Strong, walking over to the door, held the portière aside.

"After you," he said courteously.

"Is that all the advice you have for me?" she persisted.

"After you," he repeated.

"Well, I'm sorry," she said sulkily. "What is it you want me —"

"Pardon me," he interrupted in uncompromising tones. "I am sure they are waiting for us in the other room."

"You are treating me like a spoiled child," declared Miss Ennis, stamping a period to the charge with her high French heel.

## THE RE-MADE LADY

“Precisely.”

She marched out of the room, and, with the physician, joined the rest of the company. For the remainder of the evening she spoke little to any one and not at all to Dr. Strong. But when she came to say good-night he was standing apart. He held out his hand, which she could not well avoid seeing.

“When you get up to-morrow,” he said, “look in the mirror, [she winced] and say, ‘I can be beautiful if I want to hard enough.’ Good-bye.”

Luncheon at the Clydes’ next day was given up to a family discussion of Miss Louise Ennis, precipitated by Mr. Clyde, who rallied Dr. Strong on his newest departure.

“Turned beauty doctor, have you?” he taunted good-humoredly.

“Trainer, rather,” answered Dr. Strong.

“You might be in better business,” declared Mrs. Sharpless, with her customary frankness. “Beauty is only skin-deep.”

“Grandma Sharpless’s quotations,” remarked Dr. Strong to the saltcellar, “are almost as sure to be wrong as her observations are to be right.”

“It was a wiser man than you or I who spoke that truth about beauty.”

“Nonsense! Beauty only skin-deep, indeed! It’s liver-deep anyway. Often it’s soul-deep. Do

## THE HEALTH MASTER

you think you've kept your good looks, Grandma Sharpless, just by washing your skin?"

"Don't you try to dodge the issue by flattery, young man," said the old lady, the more brusquely in that she could see her son-in-law grinning boyishly at the mounting color in her face. "I'm as the Lord made me."

"And as you've kept yourself, by clean, sound living. Miss Ennis is n't as the Lord made her or meant her. She's a mere parody of it. Her basic trouble is an ailment much more prevalent among intelligent people than they are willing to admit. In the books it is listed under various kinds of hyphenated neurosis; but it's real name is fool-in-the-head."

"Curable?" inquired Mr. Clyde solicitously.

"There's no known specific except removing the seat of the trouble with an axe," announced Dr. Strong. "But cases sometimes respond to less heroic treatment."

"Not this case, I fear," put in Mrs. Clyde. "Louise will coddle herself into the idea that you have grossly insulted her. She won't come back."

"Won't she!" exclaimed Mrs. Sharpless. "Insult or no insult, she would come to the bait that Dr. Strong has thrown her if she had to crawl on her knees."

## THE RE-MADE LADY

Come she did, prompt to the hour. From out the blustery February day she lopped into the physician's pleasant study, slumped into a chair, and held out to him a limp left hand, palm up and fingers curled. Ordinarily the most punctilious of men, Dr. Strong did not move from his stance before the fire. He looked at the hand.

"What's that for?" he inquired.

"Are n't you going to feel my pulse?"

"No."

"Nor take my temperature?"

"No."

"Nor look at my tongue?"

"Certainly not. I have a quite sufficient idea of what it looks like."

The tone was almost brutal. Miss Ennis began to whimper.

"I'm a m—m—mess, I know," she blubbered.

"But you need n't keep telling me so."

"A mess can be cleared up," said he more kindly, "under orders."

"I'll do whatever you tell me, if only —"

"Stop! There will be no 'if' about it. You will do as you are bid, or we will drop the case right here."

"No, no! Don't drop me. I will. I promise. Only, please tell me what is the matter with me."

Dr. Strong, smiling inwardly, recalled the diag-

## THE HEALTH MASTER

nosis he had announced to the Clydes, but did not repeat it.

“Nothing,” he said.

“But I know there must be. I have such strange symptoms. You can’t imagine.”

Fumbling in her hand-bag she produced a very elegant little notebook with a gold pencil attached. Dr. Strong looked at it with fascinated but ominous eyes.

“I’ve jotted down some of the symptoms here,” she continued, “just as they occurred. You see, here’s Thursday. That was a heart attack —”

“Let me see that book.”

She handed it to him. He carefully took the gold pencil from its socket and returned it to her.

“Now, is there anything in this but symptoms? Any addresses that you want to keep?”

“Only one: the address of a freckle and blemish remover.”

“We’ll come to that later. Meantime —” He tossed the book into the heart of the coal fire where it promptly curled up and perished.

“Why — why — why —” gasped the visitor, — “how dare you? What do you mean? That is an ivory-bound, gold-mounted book. It’s valuable.”

“I told you, I believe, that the treatment would be expensive. This is only the beginning. Of all outrageous, unforgivable kinds of self-coddling,



## THE RE-MADE LADY

the hypochondria that keeps its own autobiography is the worst."

Regrettable though it is to chronicle, Miss Ennis hereupon emitted a semi-yelp of rage and beat the floor with her high French heels. Instantly the doctor's gaze shifted to her feet. Just how it happened she could not remember, but her right foot, unprotected, presently hit the floor with a painful thump, while the physician contemplated the shoe which he had deftly removed therefrom.

"Two inches and a half at least, that heel," he observed. "Talk about the Chinese women torturing their feet!" He laid the offending article upon the hearth, set his own soundly shod foot upon it, and tweaked off two inches of heel with the fire-tongs. "Not so pretty," he remarked, "but at least you can walk, and not tittup in that. Give me the other."

Shocked and astounded into helplessness, she mechanically obeyed. He performed his rough-and-ready repairs, and handed it back to her.

"Speaking of walking," he said calmly, "have you stored your automobile yet?"

"No! I — I — I —"

"After to-morrow I don't want you to set foot in it. Now, then, we're going to put you through a course of questioning. Ready?"

Miss Ennis settled back in her chair, with the

## THE HEALTH MASTER

anticipatory expression of one to whom the recital of her own woe is a lingering pleasure. "Perhaps if I told you," she began, "just how I feel —"

"Never mind that. Do you drink?"

"No!" The answer came back on the rebound.

"Humph!" Dr. Strong leaned over her. She turned her head away.

"You asked me as if you meant I was a drunkard," she complained. "Once in a while, when I have some severe nervous strain to undergo, I need a stimulant."

"Oh. Cocktail?"

"Yes. A mild one."

"A mild cocktail! That's a paradox I've never encountered. How often do you take these mild cocktails?"

"Oh, just occasionally."

"Well, a meal is an occasion. Before meals?"

"Sometimes," she admitted reluctantly.

"You did n't have one here last night."

"No."

"And you ate almost nothing."

"That is just it, you see. I need something: otherwise I have no appetite."

"In other words, you have formed a drink habit."

"Oh, Dr. Strong!" It was half reproach, half insulted innocence, that wail.

"After a cocktail — or two — or three," he looked

## THE RE-MADE LADY

at her closely, but she would not meet his eyes, "you eat pretty well?"

"Yes, I suppose so."

"And then go to bed with a headache because you've stimulated your appetite to more food than your run-down mechanism can rightly handle."

"I do have a good many headaches."

"Do anything for them?"

"Yes. I take some harmless powders, sometimes."

"Harmless, eh? A harmless headache powder is like a mild cocktail. It does n't exist. So you're adding drug habit to drink habit. Fortunately, it is n't hard to stop. It has begun to show on you already, in that puffy grayness under the eyes. All the coal-tar powders vitiate the blood as well as affect the heart. Sleep badly?"

"Very often."

"Take anything for that?"

"You mean opiates? I'm not a fool, Doctor."

"You mean you have n't gone quite that far," said the other grimly. "You've started in on two habits; but not the worst. Well, that's all. Come back when you need to."

Miss Ennis's big, dull eyes opened wide. "Are n't you going to give me anything? Any medicine?"

"You don't need it."

"Or any advice?"

## THE HEALTH MASTER

Dr. Strong permitted himself a little smile at the success of his strategy. "Give it to yourself," he suggested. "You showed, in flashes, during the dinner talk last night, that you have both wit and sense, when you choose to use them. Do it now."

The girl squirmed uncomfortably. "I suppose you want me to give up cocktails," she murmured in a die-away voice.

"Absolutely."

"And try to get along with no stimulants at all?"

"By no means. Fresh air and exercise ad lib."

"And to stop the headache powders?"

"Right; go on."

"And to stop thinking about my symptoms?"

"Good! I did n't reckon on your inherent sense in vain."

"And to walk where I have been riding?"

"Rain or shine."

"What about diet?"

"All the plain food you want, at any time you really want it, provided you eat slowly and chew thoroughly."

"À la Fletcher?"

"Horace Fletcher is one of those fine fanatics whose extravagances correct the average man's stolid stupidities. I've seen his fad made ridiculous, but never harmful. Try it out."

"And you won't tell me when to come back?"

## THE RE-MADE LADY

“When you need to, I said. The moment the temptation to break over the rules becomes too strong, come. And — eh — by the way — eh — don’t worry about your mirror for a while.”

Temporarily content with this, the new patient went away with new hope. Wiping his brow, the doctor strolled into the sitting-room where he found the family awaiting him with obvious but repressed curiosity.

“It is n’t ethical, I suppose,” said Mr. Clyde, “to discuss a patient’s case with outsiders?”

“You’re not outsiders. And she’s not my patient, in the ordinary sense, since I’m giving my services free. Moreover, I need all the help I can get.”

“What can *I* do?” asked Mrs. Clyde promptly.

“Drop in at her house from time to time, and cheer her up. I don’t want her to depend upon me exclusively. She has depended altogether too much on doctors in the past.”

Mr. Clyde chuckled. “Did she tell you that the European medical faculty had chased her around to every spa on the Continent? Neurasthenic dyspepsia, they called it.”

“Pretty name! Seventy per cent of all dyspeptics have the seat of the imagination in the stomach. The difficulty is to divert it.”

“What’s your plan?”

“Oh, I’ve several, when the time comes. For

## THE HEALTH MASTER

the present I've got to get her around into condition."

"Spoiled mind, spoiled body," remarked Mrs. Sharpless.

"Exactly. And I'm going to begin on the body, because that is the easiest to set right. Look out for an ill-tempered cousin during the next fortnight."

His prophecy was amply confirmed by Mrs. Clyde, who made it her business, amid multifarious activities, to drop in upon Miss Ennis with patient frequency. On the tenth day of the "cure," Mrs. Clyde reported to the household physician: —

"If I go there again I shall probably *slap* her. She's become simply unbearable."

"Good!" said Dr. Strong. "Fine! She has had the nerve to stick to the rules. We need n't overstrain her, though. I'll have her come here tomorrow."

Accordingly, at six o'clock in the evening of the eleventh day, the patient stamped into the office, wet, bedraggled, and angry.

"Now look!" she cried. "You made me store my motor-car. All the street-cars were crowded. My umbrella turned inside out. I'm a perfect drench. And I know I'll catch my death of cold." Whereupon she laid a pathetic hand on her chest and coughed hollowly.

## THE RE-MADE LADY

“Stick out your foot,” ordered Dr. Strong. And, as she obeyed: “That’s well. Good, sensible storm shoes. I’ll risk your taking cold. How do you feel? Better?”

“No. Worse!” she snapped.

“I suppose so,” he retorted with a chuckle.

“What is more,” she declared savagely, “I look worse!”

“So your mirror has been failing in its mission of flattery. Too bad. Now take off your coat, sit right there by the fire, and in an hour you’ll be dry as toast.”

“An hour? I can’t stay an hour!”

“Why not?”

“It’s six o’clock. I must go home. Besides,” she added unguardedly, “I’m half starved.”

“In—deed! Had a cocktail to-day?”

“No. Certainly not.”

“Yet you have an appetite. A bad sign. Oh, a very bad sign — for the cocktail market.”

“I’m so tired all the time. And I wake up in the morning with hardly any strength to get out of bed —”

“Or the inclination? Which?” broke in the doctor.

“And my heart gives the queerest jumps and —”

“Thought we’d thrown that symptom-book into the fire. Stand up, please.”

She stood. Dr. Strong noted with satisfaction

## THE HEALTH MASTER

how, already, the lithe and well-set figure had begun to revert to its natural pose, showing that the muscles were beginning to do their work. He also noted that the hands, hitherto a mere *mélange* of nervously writhing fingers, hung easily slack.

“Your troubles,” he said pleasantly, “have only just begun. I think you’re strong enough now to begin work.”

“I’m not,” she protested, half weeping. “I feel faint this minute.”

“Good, healthy hunger. Of course, if a glance in your mirror convinces you that you’ve had enough of the treatment —”

Miss Ennis said something under her breath which sounded very much like “Brute!”

“Have you ever had a good sweat?” he asked abruptly.

Her lips curled superciliously. “I’m not given to perspiration, I’m thankful to —”

“Did I say ‘perspire’?” inquired he. “I understood myself to say ‘sweat.’ Have you ever —”

“No.”

“High time you began. Buy yourself the heaviest sweater you can find — you may call it a ‘perspirationer’ if you think the salesman will appreciate your delicacy — and I’ll be around to-morrow and set up a punching-bag for you.”

“What is that?”



## THE RE-MADE LADY

“A device which you strike at. The blow forces it against a board and it returns and, unless you dodge nimbly, impinges upon your countenance. In other words, whacks you on the nose. Prize-fighters use it.”

“I suppose you want me to be like a prize-fighter.”

“The most beautiful pink-and-white skin and the clearest eye I’ve ever seen belonged to a middle-weight champion. Yes, I’d like to see you exactly like him in that respect. One hour every day—”

“I simply can’t. I shan’t have time. With the walking I do now I’m busy all the morning and dead tired all the afternoon; and in the evening there is my bridge club—”

“Ah, you play bridge. For money?”

“Naturally we don’t play for counters.”

“Well, I’d give it up.”

“You are not employed as a censor of my morals, Dr. Strong.”

“No; but I’ve undertaken to censor your nerves. And gambling, for a woman in your condition, is altogether too much of a strain.”

The corners of Miss Ennis’s mouth quivered babyishly. “I’m sure, then, that working like a prize-fighter will be too much strain. You’re wearing me out.”

“I’m a cruel tyrant,” mocked Dr. Strong; “and

## THE HEALTH MASTER

worse is to come. We'll clear out a room in your house and put in not only the punching-bag, but also pulleys and a rowing-machine. And I'll send up an athletic instructor to see that you use them."

"I won't have him. I'll send him away!"

"By advice of your mirror?"

Miss Ennis frankly and angrily wept.

"Now I'll tell you a secret about yourself."

Miss Ennis stopped weeping.

"Ninety-nine cases out of a hundred I could n't handle as I am handling your case. They would need a month's rest and building up before they'd be fit for real work. But you are naturally a powerful, muscular woman with great physical endurance and resiliency. What I am trying to do is to take advantage of your splendid equipment to pull you out."

"What would you do with the ordinary case?" asked the girl, interested.

"Oh, put her to bed, perhaps. Perhaps send her away to the woods. Maybe set a nurse over her to see that she did n't take to writing her symptoms down in a book. Keep her on a rigid diet, and build her up by slow and dull processes. You may thank your stars that—"

"I don't thank my stars at all!" broke in the patient, as her besetting vice of self-pity asserted itself. "I'd much rather do that than be driven like

## THE RE-MADE LADY

a galley-slave. I'm too tired to get any pleasure out of anything—”

“Even bridge?” interposed the tormentor softly.

“— and when night comes I fall into bed like a helpless log.”

“That's the best news I've heard yet. You're progressing. Now take that new appetite of yours home to dinner. And don't spoil it by eating too fast. Good-night.”

Fully a fortnight later Grandma Sharpless met Dr. Strong in the hallway as he came in from a walk.

“What have you been doing to Louise Ennis?” she demanded.

“Lots of things. What's wrong now? Another fit of the sulks?”

“Worse,” said the old lady in a stage whisper. “She's got *paint* on her face.”

Dr. Strong laughed. “Really? It might be worse. In fact, as a symptom, it could n't be better.”

“Young man, do you mean to tell me that face-paint is a good thing for a young woman?”

“Oh, no. It's vulgar and tawdry, as a practice. But I'm glad to know that Miss Ennis has turned to it, because it shows that she recognizes her own improvement and is trying to add to it.”

“But the stuff will ruin her skin,” cried the scandalized old lady. “See what dreadful faces women have who use it. Look at the actresses—”

## THE HEALTH MASTER

“Well, look at them!” broke in the physician. “There is no class of women in the world with such beautiful skin as the women of the stage. And that in spite of hard work, doubtful habits of eating, and irregular hours. Do you know why?”

“I suppose you’ll tell me that paint does it,” said Mrs. Sharpless with a sniff.

“Not the paint itself. But the fact that in putting it on and taking it off, they maintain a profound cleanliness of skin which the average woman does n’t even understand. The real value of the successful skin-lotions and creams so widely exploited lies in the massage which their use compels.”

“Aside from the stuff on her face,” remarked Mrs. Sharpless, “Louise looks like another woman, and acts like one. She came breezing in here like a young cyclone.”

“Which means trouble,” sighed Dr. Strong. “Now that her vitality is returning, it will demand something to feed on. Well, we shall see.”

He found his patient standing — not sitting, this time — before the fireplace, with a face of gloom. Before he could greet her, she burst out:—

“How long am I to be kept on the grind? I see nobody. I have nothing to amuse me. I’ve had a row with father.” Dr. Strong smiled. “The servants are impertinent.” The smile broadened. “The whole world is hateful!” The doctor’s face

## THE RE-MADE LADY

was now expanded into a positive grin. "I despise everything and everybody! I'm bored."

"Passing that over for the moment for something less important," said Dr. Strong smoothly, "where do you buy your paint?"

"I don't paint!" retorted the girl hotly.

"Well, your rouge. Your skin-rejuvenator. Your essence of bloom of youth or whatever poetic name you call it by. Let me see the box." Mutiny shone from the scowling face, but her hand went to her reticule and emerged with a small box. It passed to the physician's hand and thence to the fire.

"I'll use paint if I want to," declared the girl.

"Undoubtedly. But you'll use good paint if you use any. Get a theatrical paper, read the ads, and send for the highest grade of grease-paint. I won't say anything about the vulgarity of the practice because I'm not censoring your manners. I'll only state that three months from now you won't want or need paint. Did you get this stuff," he nodded toward the fireplace whence issued a highly perfumed smoke, "from that address in your deceased symptom-book?"

"Yes."

"That was the firm which advertised to remove pimples, was n't it?"

Miss Ennis shrank. "Pimple is an inexcusable word," she protested.

## THE HEALTH MASTER

“Word? We’re dealing in realities now. And pimples were an inexcusable reality in your case, because they were the blossoms of gluttony, torpor, and self-indulgence.”

He leaned forward and looked closely at her chin. The surface, once blotched and roughened, was now of a smooth and soft translucency. “You once objected to the word ‘sweat,’” he continued. “Well, it has eliminated the more objectionable word ‘pimple’ from your reckoning. And it has done the job better than your blemish-remover — which leaves scars.”

Her hand went to her temple, where there was a little group of silvery-white patches on the skin. “Can’t you fix that?” she asked anxiously.

“No. Your ‘remover’ was corrosive sublimate. It certainly removed the blemish. It would also have removed your entire face if you had used enough of it. Nothing can restore what the liquid fire has burned away. That’s the penalty you pay for foolish credulousness. Fortunately, it is where it won’t show much.”

Gloom surged back into her face. “It does n’t make any difference,” she fretted. “I’m still a mess in looks even if I don’t feel so much like one.”

“One half of looks is expression,” stated the doctor didactically. “I don’t like yours. What’s your religion?”

## THE RE-MADE LADY

His patient stared. "Why, I'm a Presbyterian, I suppose."

"Humph! You suppose! It does n't seem to have struck in very hard. Any objection to going to a Christian Science church?"

"Christian Science! I thought the regular doctors considered it the worst kind of quackery."

"The regular doctors," returned Dr. Strong quickly, "once considered anæsthesia, vaccination, and the germ theory as quackery. We live and learn, like others. There's plenty of quackery in Christian Science, and also quite a little good. And nowadays we're learning to accept the good in new dogmas, and discard the bad."

"And you really wish me to go to the Christian Science church?"

"Why not? You'll encounter there a few wild fanatics. I'll trust your hard common sense to guard you against their proselytizing. You'll also meet a much larger number of sweet, gentle, and cheerful people, with a sweet, helpful, and cheerful philosophy of life. That'll help to cure you."

"And what will they cure me of, since you say I have no disease?"

"They'll cure you of turning your mouth down at the corners instead of up."

At this, the mouth referred to did, indeed, turn up at the corners, but in no very pleasant wise.

## THE HEALTH MASTER

“You think they’ll amuse me?” she inquired contemptuously.

“Oh, as for amusement, I’ve arranged for that. You’re bored. Very well, I expected it. It’s a symptom, and a good one, in its place. I’ll get you a job.”

“Indeed! And if I don’t want a job?”

“No matter what you want. You need it.”

“Settlement work, I suppose.”

“Nothing so mild. Garbage inspection.”

“*What!*” Louise Ennis closed her eyes in expectation of a qualm of disgust. The qualm did n’t materialize. “What’s the matter with me?” she asked in naïve and suppressed chagrin. “I ought to feel — well, nauseated.”

“Nonsense! Your nerves and stomach have found their poise. That’s all.”

“But what do I know about garbage?”

“You know it when you see it, don’t you? Now, listen. There has been a strike of the city teamsters. Dr. Merritt, the Health Officer, wants volunteers to inspect the city and report on where conditions are bad from day to day. You’ve got intelligence. You can outwalk nine men out of ten. And you can be of real service to the city. Besides, it’s doctor’s orders.”

The story of Louise Ennis’s part in the great garbage strike, and of her subsequent door-to-door canvass of housing conditions, has no place in this



## THE RE-MADE LADY

account. After the start, Dr. Strong saw little of her; but he heard much from Mrs. Clyde, who continued her frequent visits to the Ennis household; not so much, as she frankly admitted, for the purpose of furnishing bulletins to Dr. Strong, as because of her own growing interest in and affection for the girl. And, as time went on, Strong noticed that, on the occasions when he chanced to meet his patient on the street, she was usually accompanied by one or another of the presentable young men of the community, a fact which the physician observed with professional approval rather than personal gratification.

“It is n’t her health alone,” said Mrs. Clyde, when they were discussing her, one warm day in the ensuing summer. “These six months seem to have made a new person of her. Trust the children to find out character. Bettykins wants to spend half her time with Cousin Lou.”

“You’ve surely worked a transformation, Strong,” said Clyde. “But, of course, the raw material was there. You could n’t do much for the average homely woman.”

“The average woman is n’t homely,” said Mrs. Clyde. “She’s got good looks either spoiled or undeveloped.”

“Perfectly true,” confirmed Dr. Strong. “Any young woman whose face is n’t actually malformed

## THE HEALTH MASTER

can find her place in the eternal scheme of beauty if she tries. Nature works toward beauty in all matters of sex. Where beauty does n't exist it is merely an error in Nature's game."

"Then the world is pretty full of errors," said Mrs. Sharpless.

"Most of them are n't Nature's errors. They are the mistakes of the foolish human. Take almost any woman, not past the age of development, build up her figure to be supple and self-sustaining; give her a clear eye, quick-moving blood, fresh skin, and some interest in the game of life that shall keep mind and body alert — why, the radiant force of her abounding health would make itself felt in a blind asylum. And all this she can do for herself, with a little knowledge and a good deal of will."

"But that is n't exactly beauty, is it?" asked Clyde, puzzled.

"Is n't it? In the soundest sense, I think it is. Anyway, put it this way: No woman who is wholly healthy, inside and out, can fail to be attractive."

"I wish that painter-man could see Louise now, as an example," said Grandma Sharpless.

"Oren Taylor?" said Mr. Clyde. "Why, he can. He goes East next week, and I'll wire him to stop over."

Oren Taylor arrived late on a warm afternoon. As he crossed the lawn, Louise Ennis was playing

## THE RE-MADE LADY

“catch” with Manny Clyde. Her figure swung and straightened with the lithe muscularity of a young animal. Her cheek was clear pink, deepening to the warmer color of the curved lips. The blue veins stood out a little against the warm, moist temples from which she brushed a vagrant lock of hair. Her eyes were wide and lustrous with the eager effort of the play, for the boy was throwing wide in purposeful delight over her swift gracefulness.

“Great Heavens!” exclaimed the artist, staring at her. “Who did that?”

“Strong did that,” explained Clyde; “as per specifications.”

“A triumph!” declared Taylor. “A work of art.”

“Oh, no,” said Dr. Strong; “a renewal of Nature.”

“In any case, a lady remade and better than new. My profound felicitations, Dr. Strong.” He walked over to the flushed and lovely athlete. “Miss Ennis,” he said abruptly, “I want your permission to stay over to-morrow and sketch you. I need you in my ‘Poet’s Cycle of the Months.’”

“How do you do, Mr. Taylor?” she returned demurely. “Of course you can sketch me, if it does n’t interfere with my working hours.” A quick smile rippled across her face like sunlight across water. “The same subject?” she asked with mischievous nonchalance.

## THE HEALTH MASTER

“No. Not even the same season,” he replied emphatically, coloring, as he bethought him of his “November, the withered mourner of glories dead and gone.”

“What part am I to play now?”

“Let Dr. Strong name it,” said Taylor with quick tact. “He has prepared the model.”

The girl turned to the physician, a little deeper tinge of color in her face.

“Referred to Swinburne,” said Strong lightly, and quoted: —

“When the hounds of Spring are on Winter’s traces,  
The mother of months in valley and plain  
Fills the shadows and windy places  
With lisp of leaves and ripple of rain.”

“Atalanta,” said Oren Taylor, bowing low to her; “the maiden spirit of the spring.”

## VII

### THE RED PLACARD

“WELL?” questioned Mrs. Clyde, facing the Health Master haggardly, as he entered the library.

“Oh, come!” he protested with his reassuring smile. “Don’t take it so tragically. You’ve got a pretty sick-looking boy there. But any thorough-going fever makes a boy of nine pretty sick.”

“What fever?” demanded the mother. “What is it?”

“Let’s start with what it is n’t — and thank Heaven. It is n’t typhoid. And it isn’t diphtheria.”

“Then it’s — it’s —”

“It’s scarlet fever,” broke in her mother, Mrs. Sharpless, who had followed the doctor into the room. “That’s what it is.”

Mrs. Clyde shuddered at the name. “Has he got the rash?”

“No. But he will have to-morrow,” stated the old lady positively.

“Do you think so, too, Dr. Strong?” Mrs. Clyde appealed.

“I’ll accept Grandma Sharpless’s judgment,”

## THE HEALTH MASTER

answered the physician. "She has seen more scarlet fever in her time than I, or most physicians. And experience is the true teacher of diagnosis."

"But you can't be sure!" persisted Mrs. Clyde. "How can you tell without the rash?"

"Not in any way that I could put into words," said her mother. "But there's something in the look of the throat and something about the eyes and skin — Well, I can't describe it, but I know it as I know my own name."

"There speaks the born diagnostician," observed the Health Master. "I'm afraid the verdict must stand."

"Then — then," faltered Mrs. Clyde, "we must act at once. I'll call up my husband at the factory."

"What for?" inquired Dr. Strong innocently.

"Why, to let him know, of course."

"Don't. When I undertook to act as Chinese-plan physician to the Clyde household, I was not only to guard the family against illness as well as I could, but also to save them worry. This is Saturday. Mr. Clyde has had a hard, trying week in the factory. Why break up his day?"

Mrs. Clyde drew a long breath and her face lightened. "Then it is n't a serious case?"

"Scarlet fever is always serious. Any disease which thoroughly poisons the system is. But there's

## THE RED PLACARD

no immediate danger; and there should n't be much danger at any time to a sturdy youngster like Charley, if he's well looked after."

"But the other children!" Mrs. Clyde turned to Mrs. Sharpless. "Where can we send them, mother?"

"Nowhere." It was the doctor who answered.

"Surely we can't keep them in the house!" cried Mrs. Clyde. "They would be certain to catch it from Charley."

"By no means certain. Even if they did, that would not be the worst thing that could happen."

"No? What would, then?" challenged Grandma Sharpless.

"That they should go out of this house, possibly carrying the poison with them into some other and defenseless community." Dr. Strong spoke a little sternly.

Neither woman replied for a moment. When Mrs. Clyde spoke, it was with a changed voice. "Yes. You are right. I did n't think. At least I thought only of my own children. It's hard to learn to think like a mother of all children."

"It's as near to the divine as any human can come," returned the Health Master gently. "However, I think I can promise you that, if the twins and Bettykin haven't been touched with the poison already, they shan't get it from Charley. We'll

## THE HEALTH MASTER

organize a defense — provided only the enemy has n't established itself already. Now the question is, where did the poison come from? We'll have Junkum in and see if she can help us find out."

Julia, the more efficient of the eleven-year-old twins, a shrewd and observing youngster, resembling, in many respects, her grandmother, came at the doctor's summons and was told what had befallen Charley.

"Oh!" said Junkum. Then, "Can I nurse him?"

"I should think not!" burst out her mother and grandmother in a breath.

"Later on you can help," said Dr. Strong. "In fact, I shall probably need your help. Now, Junkum, you remember I told you children a month ago that there was scarlet fever about and warned you to guard your mouths and noses with special care. Can you recall whether Charley has been careless?"

Miss Julia took the matter under consideration.

"We've all been, I guess," she said. "Clara Wingate gave a party last week and there was bobbing for apples, and everybody had their faces in the same tub of water."

"Yes; and Irving Wingate has since come down with scarlet fever," added Mrs. Clyde.

"Enough said!" asserted the Health Master. "I can't think of any better way to disseminate



## THE RED PLACARD

germs than an apple-bobbing contest. It beats even kissing games. Well, the mischief is done."

"Then they'll all have it," said Mrs. Clyde miserably.

"Oh, let's hope not. Nothing is more mysterious than the way contagion hits one and misses others. I should say there was at least an even chance of the rest escaping. But we must regard them as suspects, and report the house for quarantine."

"Ugh!" shuddered Mrs. Clyde. "I hate that word. And think of my husband coming home to find a flaming red placard on the house!"

"We'll give him warning before he leaves the factory. And now for our campaign. Item 1: a trained nurse. Item 2: a gas-range."

"The trained nurse, certainly," agreed Mrs. Clyde. "But why the gas-range? Is n't Charley's room warm enough?"

"Quite. The stove is n't for warmth; it's for safety. I'm going to establish a line of fire beyond which no contagion can pass. We'll put the stove in the hall, and keep on it a tin boiler full of water just at the simmering point. Everything which Charley has used or touched must go into that or other boiling water as soon as it leaves the room: the plates he eats from, the utensils he uses; his handkerchiefs, night-clothes, towels—everything."

## THE HEALTH MASTER

“That will be a hard regimen to keep up,” Mrs. Clyde objected.

“Martial law,” said the Health Master positively. “From the moment the red placard goes up, we’re in a state of siege, and I’m in command. The rules of the camp will be simple but strict. Whoever violates any of them will be liable to imprisonment in the strictest quarantine. We’ll have a household conference to-night and go over the whole matter. Now I’m going to telephone the Health Department and ask Dr. Merritt to come up and quarantine us officially.”

“But what of Charley?” exclaimed Mrs. Clyde. “You’re not going to keep me away from my boy?”

“Not when you put it in that way and use that tone,” smiled Dr. Strong. “I probably could n’t if I tried. Under official quarantine rules you’ll have to give up going anywhere outside the house. Under our local martial law you’re not to touch Charley or anything that he handles, nor to kiss the other children. And you’re to wash your hands every time you come out of the sick-room, though it’s only to step beyond the door.”

“It is an order,” said the mother gravely. “Will he be very ill, do you think?”

“So far the cases have been mild. His is likely to be, too. But it’s the most difficult kind of case to handle.”

## THE RED PLACARD

“I don’t see that at all,” said Mrs. Sharpless.

“You will, when he becomes convalescent. Then is when my troubles will begin. For the present the bulk of the work inside the sick-room will be upon the trained nurse and Mrs. Clyde. I’ll have my troubles outside, watching the rest of the family.”

Not since Dr. Strong came to the Clydes’ as guardian of their health had there been an emergency meeting called of the Household Protective Association, as the Health Master termed the organization which he had formed (mainly for educative purposes) within the family. That evening he addressed a full session, including the servants, holding up before them the red placard which the Health Department had sent, and informing them of the quarantine.

“No school?” inquired the practical-minded Bobs, “Hooray!”

“No school for you children, until further notice,” confirmed the physician.

“And no business for me, I suppose,” said Mr. Clyde, frowning.

“Oh, yes. You can come and go as you please, so long as you keep away from Charley’s room. Every one is barred from Charley’s room until further instructions, except Mrs. Clyde; and she is confined within military bounds, consisting of the

## THE HEALTH MASTER

house and yard. And now for the most important thing — Rosie and Katie,” — the cook and the maid — “pay particular heed to this — nothing of any kind which comes from the sick-room is to be touched until it is disinfected, except under my supervision. When I’m not in the house, the nurse’s authority will be absolute. Now for the clinic; we’ll look over the throats of the whole crowd.”

Throat inspection appeared to be the Health Master’s favorite pursuit for the next few days.

“I don’t dare open my mouth,” protested Bobs, “for fear he’ll peek into it and find a spot.”

“Dr. Strong spends a lot more time watching us than he does watching Charley,” remarked Junkum. “Who’s the sick one, anyway — us or him?” she concluded, her resentment getting the better of her grammar.

“Ho!” jeered Bobs, and intoned the ancient couplet, made and provided for the correction of such slips: —

“Her ain’t a-callin’ we,  
Us don’t belong to she.”

“Anyhow, I ain’t sick,” asseverated Bettina; “but he shut me up in my room for a day jus’ because my swallow worked kinda hard.”

“If I’m going to have scarlet fever I want to have scarlet fever and get done with it!” declared

## THE RED PLACARD

Bobs. "I'm getting tired of staying out of school. Charley's having all the fun there is out of this, getting read to all the time by that nurse and Mother."

Meantime nothing of interest was happening in the sick-room. Interesting phases seldom appear in scarlet fever, which is well, since, when they do appear, the patient usually dies. Not at any time did Charley evince the slightest tendency to forsake a world which he had found, on the whole, to be a highly satisfactory place of residence. In fact, he was going comfortably along through a typically light onset of the disease; and was rather less ill than he would have been with a sound case of measles. Already the furrows in Mrs. Clyde's forehead had smoothed out, and Grandma Sharpless had ceased waking, in the dead of night, with a catch at her heart and the totally unfounded fear that she had "heard something," when one morning Charley awoke, scratched a tiny flake of skin off his nose, yawned, and emitted a hollow groan.

"What is it, Charley boy?" asked his mother.

"I'm tired of staying in bed," announced the young man.

"How do you feel?"

The patient sat up, the better to consider the matter. "I feel," he stated in positive accents, "like a bucket of oyster stew, a steak as big as my

## THE HEALTH MASTER

head, with onions all over it, a whole apple pie, a platter of ice-cream, and a game of baseball."

Mrs. Clyde laughed happily. "I'll tell the Health Master," she said. She did, and Dr. Strong came up and looked the patient over carefully.

"You lie back there, young fellow," he ordered, "and play sick, no matter how well you feel, until I tell you different."

"How about that beefsteak and pie, Doctor?" inquired the boy wistfully.

"Mere prospects," retorted the hard-hearted physician. "But you can have some ice-cream."

Conclave of the elders that evening to consider the situation was opened by Dr. Strong.

"We've now reached the critical point," he began.

"Critical?" gasped Mrs. Clyde, whose nerves had been considerably stretched in the ten days of sick-room work. "Is n't he getting well?"

"He's getting well quite as quickly as I want him to. Perhaps a little more quickly. The fever is broken and he is beginning to peel."

"Then what's the difficulty?" inquired Mr. Clyde.

"Just this. Charley is a sturdy boy. The light attack he's had hasn't begun to exhaust his vitality. From now on, he is going to be a bundle of energy, without outlet."

## THE RED PLACARD

“From now on till when?” It was Grandma Sharpless who wanted to know.

“Two weeks anyway. Perhaps more.”

“Are you going to keep that poor child in bed for two weeks after he’s practically well?” said the mother.

“For three weeks if the whole family will help me. It’s not going to be easy.”

“Is n’t that a little extreme, Strong?” asked Mr. Clyde.

“Only the precaution of experience. The danger-point in scarlet fever is n’t the illness; it’s the convalescence. People think that when a child is cured of a disease, he is cured of the effects of the disease also. That mistake costs lives.”

“Because the poison is still in the system?”

“Rather, the effects of the poison. Though the patient may feel quite well, the whole machinery of the body is out of gear. What do you do when your machinery goes wrong, Clyde?”

“Stop it, of course.”

“Of course,” repeated the Health Master. “Obviously we can’t stop the machinery of life, but we can ease it down to its lowest possible strain, until it has had a chance to readjust itself. That is what I want to do in Charley’s case.”

“How does this poison affect the system?”

“If I could discover that, I’d be sure of a place

## THE HEALTH MASTER

in history. All we know is that no organ seems to be exempt from its sudden return attack long after the disease has passed. If we ever get any complete records, I venture to say that we'll find more children dying in after years from the results of scarlet fever than die from the immediate disease itself, not to mention such after-effects as deafness and blindness."

"I've noticed that," said Grandma Sharpless, "when we lived in the country. And I remember a verse on the scarlet-fever page of an old almanac:—

If they run from nose or ear,  
Watch your children for a year.

But I always set down those cases to catching cold."

"Most people do. It is n't that. It's overstrain put on a poisoned system. And it's true not of scarlet fever alone, but of measles, and diphtheria, and grippe; and, in a lesser degree, of whooping-cough and chicken pox."

"You've seen such cases in your own practice?" asked Mr. Clyde, and regretted the question as soon as he had put it, for there passed over Dr. Strong's face the quick spasm of pain which anything referring back to the hidden past before he had come to the Clyde house always brought.

"Yes," he replied with an effort. "I have had such cases, and lost them. I might even say, killed them in my ignorance."



## THE RED PLACARD

“Oh, no, Dr. Strong!” said Mrs. Clyde in quick sympathy. “Don’t say that. Being mistaken is n’t killing.”

“It is, sometimes, for a doctor. I remember one little patient who had a very light case of scarlet fever. I let her get up as soon as the fever broke. Three months later she developed a dropsical tendency. And one day she fell dead across the doll she was playing with. The official cause of death said heart disease. But I knew what it was. The next case was not so wholly my fault. The boy was a spoiled child, who held his parents in enslavement. They had n’t the strength of character to keep him under control. He insisted on riding his bicycle around the yard, three days after he was out of bed. Against his willfulness my protests were of no account. What I should have done is to have thrown up the case; but I was young and the people were my friends. Well; that boy made, apparently, a complete recovery. A few weeks later I was sent for again. There was some kidney trouble. I knew, before the analysis was made, what it would show: nephritis. The poison had struck to the kidneys like a dagger. The poor little chap dragged along for some months before he died; and his mother — God forgive me if I did wrong in telling her the truth, as I did for the protection of their other child — almost lost her reason.”

## THE HEALTH MASTER

“And such cases are common?” asked Mr. Clyde.

“Common enough to be fairly typical. Afterward, I cited the two instances in a talk before our medical society. My frankness encouraged some of the other men to be frank; and the list of fatalities and permanent disabilities, following scarlet fever and measles, which was brought out at that meeting, nearly every case being one of rushing the convalescence — well, it reformed one phase of medical procedure in — in that city and county.”

“That settles it for Charley,” decided Mr. Clyde. “He stays in bed until you certify him cured, if I have to hire a vaudeville show to keep him amused.”

“My boy is not a spoiled child!” said Mrs. Clyde proudly. “I can handle him.”

“Maybe he was n’t before,” remarked Grandma Sharpless dryly; “but I think you’ll have your hands full now.”

“Therefore,” said Dr. Strong, “I propose to enlist the services of the whole family, including the children.”

“What! Let the others go to see Charley when he’s peeling?” protested Mrs. Sharpless. “They’ll all catch it.”

“How?”

“Why, from the skin-flakes. That’s the way scarlet fever spreads.”

## THE RED PLACARD

“Is it?” said the Health Master mildly. “Then perhaps you’ll explain to me why doctors aren’t the greatest danger that civilization suffers from.”

“I suppose they disinfect themselves,” said the old lady, in a rather unconvinced tone.

“Let’s see how much that would amount to. The fine flakes of skin are likely to be pretty well disseminated in a sick-room. According to the old theory, every one of them is a potential disease-bearer. Now, a doctor could hardly be in a sick-room without getting some of them on his clothes or in his hair, as well as on his hands, which, of course, he thoroughly washes on leaving the place. But that’s the extent of his disinfection. Why don’t the flakes he carries with him spread the fever among his other patients?”

“Don’t ask *me!*” said Clyde. “I’m not good at puzzles.”

“Many doctors still hold to the old theory. But I’ve never met one who could answer that argument. Some of the best hospitals in the world discharge patients without reference to the peeling of the skin, and without evil results.”

“How is scarlet fever caught, then?” asked Mrs. Clyde.

“From the discharge from the inflamed nose and throat, or from the ears if they are affected. Anything which comes in contact with this poisonous

## THE HEALTH MASTER

mucus is dangerous. Thus, of course, the skin-flakes from the lips or the hands which had been in contact with the mouth or nose might carry the contagion, just as a fork or a tooth-brush or a handkerchief might. Now, I'll risk my status in this house on the safety of letting the other children visit Charley under certain restrictions."

"That settles it for me," said Mr. Clyde, whose faith in his friend, while not unquestioning, was fundamental; and the two women agreed, though not without misgivings. Thereupon Bobs, Julia, and Bettina were sent for, and the Health Master announced that Charley would hold a reception on the following afternoon. There were shouts of acclamation at the prospect.

"But first," added Dr. Strong, "there will be a rehearsal in the playroom, to-morrow morning."

"What do we need a rehearsal for to see Charley?" inquired Julia.

"To guard yourselves, Miss Junkum," returned the doctor. "Possibly you don't know everything about scarlet fever that you should know. Do you, Cherubic Miss Toots," he added, turning upon Bettina, "know what a contagious disease is?"

"I know," said the diminutive maiden gravely, "that if you leave Charley's door open the jerrums will fly out and bite people."

## THE RED PLACARD

“Which fairly typifies the popular opinion concerning disease bacilli,” observed Dr. Strong.

“I saw a jerrum once,” continued the infant of the family. “It was under a stone in a creek. It had horns and a wiggly tail. Just like the Devil,” she added with an engaging smile.

“Betty’s been looking at the pictures in the comic supplements,” explained her elder sister.

“Popular education by the press!” commented Dr. Strong. “Well, I have n’t time for an exposition of the germ theory now. The point is this: Can you children stay an hour in Charley’s room without putting a lot of things in your mouths?”

“Why, I never put anything in my mouth. You taught us better than that,” said Julia reproachfully.

The doctor was little impressed by the reproach. “Humph!” he grunted. “Well, suppose you stop nibbling at your hair” — Julia’s braid flew back over her shoulder — “and consider that, when you put your fingers in your mouth, you may be putting in, also, a particle of everything that your fingers have touched. And in Charley’s room there might be *jerrums*, as Twinkles calls them, from his mouth which would be dangerous. Rehearsal at noon tomorrow.”

Expectant curiosity brought the children early

## THE HEALTH MASTER

to the playroom whither they found that the Health Master had preceded them.

“When’s it going to begin?” asked Bettina.

“Presently,” replied the master of ceremonies. “We’re going to pretend that this is Charley’s room. Just at present I’m busy with some work.” He shook a notebook at them. “Go ahead and amuse yourselves till I get through.”

Julia the observant noted three hues of crayon on the stand beside the doctor. “Are you going to make a sketch?” she inquired.

“Never you mind. You attend to your affairs and I’ll attend to mine.”

“Dr. Strong is a-goin’ to make a picture of a jerrum,” Bettina informed her favorite doll, Susan Nipper, imprinting a fervent kiss on the pet’s flattened face. “Come on an’ let’s read the paper.”

Dr. Strong made a note in his book, with a pencil.

“Want to play catch, Junkum?” suggested Bobs to his twin.

“All right,” said Julia, seizing upon a glove, while Bobs, in his rôle of pitcher, professionally moistened the ball.

Dr. Strong made another note.

For half an hour they disported themselves in various ways while the Health Master, whose eyes were roving everywhere, made frequent entries in his book.

## THE RED PLACARD

“All out now,” he ordered finally. “Come back in five minutes.”

Before the time was up, they were clustered at the door. Dr. Strong admitted them.

“Does the rehearsal begin now?” asked Bobs.

“It’s all over,” said the physician. “Look around you.”

“Ow-w-w!” wailed Bettina. “Look at Susan Nipper’s nose!”

That once inconspicuous feature had turned a vivid green.

“And the baseball is red,” cried Bobs.

“So’s my glove,” announced Julia.

Walking over to her, the Health Master caught her left hand and smeared it with blue crayon. For good measure he put a dab on her chin.

“My story-book is all blue, too,” exclaimed the girl. “What’s it for?”

“Just by way of illustration,” explained the doctor. “The mouths of all of us contain germs of one kind or another. So I’ve assumed that Bob’s mouth has red, and Junkum’s blue, and Miss Twinkle’s green. Every chalk mark shows where you’ve spread your germs.”

“Then the red on the ball is where I wet my fingers for that in-curve,” said Bobs.

“And on my glove is where I caught it,” said Julia. “But what’s the blue doing on my left hand?”

## THE HEALTH MASTER

"I know," announced Bobs triumphantly. "You got that slow drop on the end of your finger and jammed your finger in your mouth."

"It hurt," defended Julia. "Look at the walls — and the Indian clubs — and the chair."

Crayon marks were everywhere.<sup>1</sup> In some places it was one color; in others another; in many, a crazy pattern of red, blue, and green.

"And if I carried it out," said the doctor, "your faces would all be as bad."

"I don't care!" murmured Betty to Susan Nipper; "I *will* kiss you even if you do turn green."

"But you must n't kiss Charley," interposed Dr. Strong. "If you've had enough rehearsal, we'll go and make our call right after luncheon."

Entering the sick-room, the three visitors stood a little abashed and strange. Their hearty, rough-and-tumble brother looked strangely drawn and bright-eyed.

"Hello, kids!" said he, airily. "Make yourselves at home."

Bettykin was the first to break the ice. "Did it hurt, Charley?" she asked, remembering her own experience with adenoids.

"Nope," said the convalescent. "Only thing that

<sup>1</sup> For this ingenious example of the crayon marks I am indebted to Dr. Charles V. Chapin, Health Officer of Providence, Rhode Island, and a distinguished epidemiologist.



## THE RED PLACARD

hurts is being kept in bed when I want to be up and around. What's new?"

Much was new, there in the room, and the children took it in, wide-eyed. Although it was early May, the windows were screened. All the hangings and curtains had been taken out of the room, which looked bare and bright. On the door of the bathroom was a huge roller-towel of soft, cloth-like paper, perforated in lengths so as to be easily detachable, and below it a scrap-basket, with a sign: "Throw Paper Towels in Here to be Burned after Using." Between the two windows was a larger sign: —

Keep your Fingers Away from Your Mouth and Nose.  
Don't Handle Utensils Lying About.  
Don't Open an Unscreened Window.  
After Touching Anything which may have been  
Contaminated Wash Your Hands at Once.  
Use the Paper Towels; They're the Only Safe Kind.  
One Dollar Reward to Any One Discovering a Fly  
in the Room.  
Wash Your Hands Immediately After Leaving the  
Room.  
Keep Outside the Dead-line.

### PENALTIES

For First Violation of Rules — Offender Reads to Patient One Hour. Second Violation — Banishment for Balance of Day.

"The dead-line is that thing, I suppose," said Junkum, pointing to a tape stretched upon standards around the bed at a distance of a yard.

## THE HEALTH MASTER

“Is it a game?” questioned the hopeful Bettina.

“No, Bettykin. It’s a germ-cage. No germs can get out of that unless they’re carried out by somebody or something. And, in that case, they’re boiled to death on the gas-stove outside.”

At this moment Charley called for a drink of water. After he had emptied the glass, his mother took it out and dropped it into the disinfecting hot bath. Then she washed her hands, dried them on a strip of the paper towel and dropped that in the basket.

“I see,” said Julia, the observant. “Nothing gets any scarlet fever on it except what Charley touches. And everything he touches has to be washed as soon as it comes out of the dead-line.”

“Exactly. We’ll make a trained nurse of you, yet, Junkum,” approved the Health Master.

“Then,” said Julia slowly, “I think Bobs ought to wash his hands now. Mother opened the door after handling Charley’s glass, and when he went to watch her wash the glass, he put his hand on the knob.”

“One mark against Bobs,” announced the doctor. “The rigor of the game.”

A game it proved to be, with Charley for umpire, and a very keen umpire, as he was the beneficiary of the penalties. For some days Charley quite fattened on literature dispensed orally by the

## THE RED PLACARD

incautious. Presently, however, they became so wary that it was hard to catch them.

Then, indeed, was the doctor hard put to it to keep the invalid amused. The children invented games and charades for him. A special telephone wire was run to his room so that he might talk with his friends. Bobs won commendations by flying a kite one windy day and passing the twine up through Charley's window, whereby the bedridden one spent a happy afternoon "feeling her pull." And the next day Betty won the first and only dollar by discovering a small and early fly which, presumably, had crawled in by the hole bored for the kite twine. As to any encroachments upon the physical quiet of his patient or the protective guardianship surrounding him, the Health Master was adamant, until, on a day, after examining the prisoner's throat and nose, and going over him, as Mr. Clyde put it, "like a man buying a horse that's cheaper than he ought to be," he sent for the Health Officer.

"It's a clean throat," said Dr. Merritt. "Never mind the desquamating skin. We'll call it off."

Whereupon Charley was raised from his bed, and having symbolically broken the tape-line about his bed, headed a solemn and slow procession of the entire family to the front porch where he formally took down the red placard and tore it in

## THE HEALTH MASTER

two. The halves still ornament the playroom, as a memento.

After this memorable ceremony, Mrs. Clyde retired to the library and, quite contrary to her usually self-restrained nature, dissolved into illogical tears, in which condition she was found by the rest.

“I — I — I don’t know what’s the matter,” she sobbed, in response to her husband’s inquiry. “It’s just because I hated the very thought of that abominable red sign so, — as if we were unclean — like lepers.”

“Well, we’re not lepers and if we can continue in that blessed state,” remarked Dr. Strong cheerfully, “we can escape most of the ills that flesh is heir to. After all, from a scientific point of view, contagion is merely the Latin synonym for a much shorter and uglier word.”

“Which is —” queried Mr. Clyde.

“Dirt,” said the Health Master.

## VIII

### HOPE FOR THE HOPELESS

“HOPELESS from the first,” said old Mrs. Sharpless, with a sigh, to her daughter.

Mrs. Clyde nodded. “I suppose so. And she has so much to live for, too.”

“What’s this that’s hopeless from the first?” asked the Health Master, looking up from the novel which he was enjoying in what he called his “lazy hour,” after luncheon.

“Mrs. Westerly’s case,” said the younger woman. “Even now that she’s gone to the hospital, the family won’t admit that it’s cancer.”

“Ah, of the liver, I suppose,” commented the physician.

“Why on earth should you suppose that?” demanded Mrs. Sharpless suspiciously.

“Why, because cancer of the liver is the only form which could possibly be regarded as hopeless from the first.”

“All cancer, if it is really cancer, is hopeless,” declared the old lady with vigorous dogmatism. “Don’t tell me. I’ve seen too many cases die and too few get well.”

## THE HEALTH MASTER

“Were those ‘few’ hopeless, too?” inquired Dr. Strong with bland slyness.

“I guess they were n’t cancer, at all,” retorted Mrs. Sharpless; “just doctors’ mistakes.”

“Doctors do make mistakes,” admitted the representative of the profession, “and cancer is one of the diseases where they are most commonly at fault. But the error is n’t of the kind that you suggest, Grandma Sharpless. Where they go wrong so often is in mistaking cancer for some less malignant trouble; not in mistaking the less malignant forms for cancer. And that wastes thousands of lives every year which might have been saved.”

“How could they have been saved?” asked the old lady combatively.

“Let me do the questioning for a minute, and perhaps we’ll get at that. Now, these many cases that you’ve known: were most of the fatal ones recent?”

“Not very,” she replied, after some consideration. “No; most of them were from ten years ago, back.”

“Exactly. Now, the few that recovered: when did these occur?”

“Within a few years.”

“None of the old cases recovered?”

“No.”

## HOPE FOR THE HOPELESS

“But a fair proportion of the more recent ones have?”

“Yes.”

“All these were operated on, were n't they?”

“Yes; I believe they were. But not all that were operated on lived.”

“Did a single one of those not operated on live?”

“Not so far as I can remember.”

“Well, there we have the truth about cancer in a few words; or, anyway, a good part of the truth. Up to twenty years ago or so, cancer was practically incurable. It always returned after operation. That was because the surgeon thought he needed only to cut out the cancer. Now he knows better; he knows that he must cut out all the tissue and the glands around the obvious cancer, and thus get the root of the growth out of the system.”

“And that cures?” asked Mrs. Clyde.

“In a great majority of cases, *if it is done early enough.*” The Health Master dropped his book and beat time with an emphatic forefinger to his concluding words.

“But Agnes Westerly's is cancer of the breast,” said Mrs. Clyde, as if that clinched the case against the patient.

“Just about the most favorable locality.”

“I thought it was the worst.”

“Where on earth do intelligent women collect

## THE HEALTH MASTER

their superstitions about cancer?" cried Dr. Strong. "Carcinoma of the breast is the commonest form among women, and the easiest to handle. Show me a case in the first stages and, with a good surgical hospital at hand, I'd almost guarantee recovery. It's simply a question of removing the entire breast, and sometimes the adjacent glands. Ninety per cent of the early cases should get well."

"But the operation itself is so terrible," shuddered Mrs. Clyde.

"Terrible? Unpleasant, I'll admit. But if you mean terrible in the sense of dangerous, or even serious, you're far wrong again. The percentage of mortality from the operation itself is negligible. But the percentage of mortality without operation is 100 out of 100. So the choice is an easy one."

"They seem to hold out little hope for Agnes Westerly."

"Let's hear about the circumstances," suggested Dr. Strong.

"About two years ago —"

"That's a bad beginning," interrupted the physician, shaking his head.

"— She noticed a small lump in her right breast. It did n't trouble her much —"

"It seldom does at the start."

"— And she did n't want to alarm her husband; so she said nothing about it. It kept getting a little



## HOPE FOR THE HOPELESS

larger very slowly, but there was no outside sore; so she thought it could n't be serious. If it were, she thought, it would pain her."

"That fatal mistake! Pain is a late symptom in cancer — usually too late."

"It was curious the way she finally came to find out. She read an advertisement in the paper, headed, 'Any Lump in Woman's Breast is Cancer.'"

"Yes; I know that advertisement. It's put out by a scoundrel named Chamlee. Surely, she did n't try his torturing treatment?"

"Oh, no. Agnes is too intelligent for that. But it frightened her into going to her doctor. He told her that a radical operation was her only chance. She was terribly frightened, — more afraid of the knife than of the disease, she told me, — and she insisted on delay until the pain grew intolerable. And now, they say, there's only a slight chance. Is n't it pitiful?"

"Pitiful, and typical. Mrs. Westerly, if she dies, is a type of suicide, the suicide of fear and ignorance. Two years' waiting! And every day subtracting from her chance. That's the curse of cancer; that people won't understand the vital necessity of promptness."

"But is it true that any lump in a woman's breast is cancer?" asked Mrs. Sharpless.

"No; it's a lie; a damnable lie, circulated by that

## THE HEALTH MASTER

quack to scare foolish women into his toils. Most of such lumps are non-malignant growths. This is true, though: that any lump in a woman's breast is suspicious. It may be cancer; or it may develop into cancer. The only course is to find out."

"How?"

"With the knife."

"Is n't that rather a severe method for a symptom that may not mean anything?"

"Not too severe, considering the danger. Whatever the lump may be, it has no business there in the breast, any more than a bullet has. If it is only a small benign tumor, the process of taking it out is very simple, and there is nothing further to do. While the patient is still under the anæsthetic, a microscopical examination of the tissue, which can be made in a few minutes in a well-equipped hospital, will determine whether the growth is malignant. If so, the whole breast is taken off, and the patient, in all probability, saved. If not, sew up the wound, and the subject is none the worse. Much the better, in fact, for the most innocent growth may develop cancer by irritation. Thirty per cent, or more, of breast cancers develop in this way."

"But irritation alone won't cause cancer, will it?" asked Mrs. Clyde, her restlessly inquiring mind reaching back, as was typical of her mental processes, toward first causes.

## HOPE FOR THE HOPELESS

“No. There must be something else. What that something is, we don’t know. But we are pretty certain that it does n’t develop unless there is irritation of some kind.”

“Is n’t cancer a germ disease?”

“Nobody knows. Some day we may — probably shall — find out. Meantime we have the knowledge of how to prevent it.”

“How to prevent a disease you don’t know the nature of?” said Mrs. Sharpless incredulously. “That sounds like nonsense.”

“Does it? What about smallpox? We have n’t any idea of what smallpox really is; but we are able to control it with practical certainty through vaccination.”

“Doctors don’t vaccinate for cancer,” remarked the practical-minded old lady.

“They have tried serums, but that is no use. As I said, the immediate occasion of cancer is irritation. There is overwhelming proof that an unhealing sore or irritation at any point is likely to result in the development of a cancer at that point, and at least a highly probable inference that, without such irritation, the disease would not develop.”

“Then why not get rid of the irritation?”

“Ah, there’s the point. That’s where the tremendous life-saving could be effected. Take a very simple instance, cancer of the lip. In a thousand

## THE HEALTH MASTER

cases recorded by one of the Johns Hopkins experts, there was n't one but had developed from a small sore, at first of innocent nature. It is n't too much to say that this particular manifestation of cancer is absolutely preventable. If every person with a sore on the lip which does n't heal within three weeks were to go to a good surgeon, this hideous and defacing form of tumor would disappear from the earth. As for carcinoma of the tongue, one of the least hopeful of all varieties, no careful person need ever develop it. Good dentistry, which keeps the mouth free of jagged tooth-edges, is half the battle. The other half is caution on the part of smokers. If a white patch develops in the mouth, tobacco should be given up at once. Unless the patch heals within a few weeks, the patient should consult a physician, and, if necessary, have it removed by a minor operation. That's all there is to that."

"But if the irritant sore is internal?" inquired Mrs. Clyde.

"To the watchful it will give evidence of its presence, usually in time. If it is in the intestines or stomach, there is generally some uneasiness, vague, perhaps, but still suspicious, to announce the danger. Surgical records covering a long period show that eighty per cent of stomach cancers were preceded by definite gastric symptoms of more than a

## HOPE FOR THE HOPELESS

year's duration. If it is in the uterus, there are definite signs which every woman ought to be taught to understand. And here, to go back to the matter of cure, even if the discovery is n't made until cancer has actually developed, there is an excellent chance in the early stages. Cancer of the stomach used to be sure doom to a hideous death. Now, taking the cases as they come, the desperate chances with the early cases, more than a quarter are saved in the best surgical hospitals. Where the growth is in the womb or the intestines, with reasonably early discovery, a generous half should be repaired and returned to active life as good as new."

"That does n't seem possible," said Mrs. Sharpless flatly.

"Simply because you've been steeped in the fatalism which surrounds cancer. That fatalism, which is so hard to combat, is what keeps women from the saving hope of the knife. 'I've got to die anyway,' they say, 'and I'm not going to be carved up before I die.' And so they throw away what chance they have. Oh, if only I had control of the newspapers of this city for one day a week or a month, — just for a half-column editorial, — what a saving of life I could effect! A little simple advice in straight-out terms would teach the people of this community to avoid poor Mrs. Westerly's fate."

## THE HEALTH MASTER

“And drive ’em all into the hands of the doctors,” said Mrs. Sharpless shrewdly. “A fine fattening of fees for your trade, young man.”

“Do you think so? Do you think that cancer *ever* fails to come to the physician at last? And do you think the fee is less because the surgeon has to do twice the amount of work with a hundredth of the hope of success?”

“No-o-o,” admitted the old lady, with some hesitancy; “I did n’t think of it in that light.”

“Few do. Oh, for the chance to teach people to think straight about this! Publicity is what we need so bitterly, and the only publicity goes to the quacks who pay for it, because the local newspapers don’t want to write about ‘unpleasant topics,’ forsooth!”

“Do you want a chance for some publicity in a small way?” asked Mrs. Clyde.

“Do I! Show me the chance.”

“The Mothers’ Association meets here this afternoon. We have n’t much business on hand. Come in and talk to us for an hour.”

“Fine!” said the Health Master, with enthusiasm. “Half of that time will do me. How many will be there?”

“About sixty.”

“Very well. Just have me introduced with the statement that I’m going to talk informally on a subject of importance to all of you; and then help

## HOPE FOR THE HOPELESS

me out with a little object lesson. I'll want sixty sealed envelopes for the members to draw."

"Are you conducting a lottery, young man?" queried Grandma Sharpless.

"In a way. Rather I'm arranging an illustration for the great lottery which Life and Death conduct."

Two hours later, the business of the meeting having been concluded, Mrs. Clyde asked, from the assembled mothers, the privilege of the floor for Dr. Strong, and this being granted, aroused the curiosity of the meeting by requesting each member to draw an envelope from the basket which she carried around, while the presiding officer introduced the speaker.

"Let me begin," said the Health Master, "with an ungallant assumption. I'm going to assume that I'm talking to a gathering of middle-aged women. That being the case, I'm going on to a very unpleasant statement, to wit, that one out of every eight women here may reasonably expect to die of cancer in some form."

A little subdued flutter passed through the room, and the name of Agnes Westerly was whispered.

"Yes; it is Mrs. Westerly's case which is responsible for my being here," said Dr. Strong, who had abnormally keen hearing. "I would like to save

## THE HEALTH MASTER

at least part of the eight out of your number, who are statistically doomed, from this probable fate. To bring the lesson home to you, I have had each of you draw an envelope. Eight of these represent death by cancer.”

Every eye in the room turned, with rather ghastly surmise, to the little white squares. But old Mrs. Sharpless rose from her place, marched upon the Health Master, as one who leads a charge, and in low but vehement tones protested: “I won’t be a party to any such nonsense. The idea! Scaring some woman that’s as well as you are into nervous collapse with your black dot or red cross or whatever you’ve got inside these envelopes.”

“Oh, Grandma Sharpless, Grandma Sharpless! Have you known me all this time not to trust me further than that?” whispered the Health Master. “Wait and see.”

A little woman near the rear of the room spoke up with a fine bravado: “I’m not afraid. It can’t *give* me cancer.” Then a pause, and a sigh of relief, which brought out a ripple of nervous laughter from the rest, as she said, “There’s nothing in mine.”

“Nor in mine,” added a young and pretty woman, in the second row, who had furtively and swiftly employed a hatpin to satisfy her curiosity.

“Nor mine!” — “Nor mine!” added a dozen voices, in varying tones of alleviated suspense.



## HOPE FOR THE HOPELESS

“Not in any of them,” said Dr. Strong, smiling. “My little design was to arouse you collectively to a sense of the danger, not to frighten you individually into hysterics.” (At this point Mrs. Sharpless sat down abruptly and fanned a resentful face.) “The ugly fact remains, however: one out of every eight here is marked for death by the most dreadful of diseases, unless you do something about it.”

“What can we do?” inquired the minister’s wife, in the pause that followed this statement.

“Educate yourselves. If, in the process, you educate others, so much the better. Now I propose to tell you all about cancer in half an hour. Does that sound like a large contract? When I say ‘all,’ I mean all that it is necessary for you to know in order to protect yourselves. And, for good measure, I’ll answer any questions — if I can — within the limit of time.”

“What *is* cancer?” asked a voice.

“Ah! There is one that I can’t answer. No one knows. If I told you that it was a malignant tumor, that would be true, but it would n’t be an answer, because we don’t know the real nature and underlying cause of the tumor. Whether it is caused by a germ, science has not yet determined. But though we know nothing of the fundamental cause of the disease, we do understand, definitely, what is the immediate causative influence. It practically always

## THE HEALTH MASTER

arises from some local sore or irritation. Therefore — and here is my first important point — it is preventable.”

“That would be only theoretically, would n’t it, Dr. Strong?” asked the little woman who had first braved the venture of the sealed envelope. “One can’t get through life without bumps and scratches.”

“True. But ordinary bumps or scratches properly looked after don’t cause cancer. The sore must be an unhealing one, or the irritation a continued condition, in order to be dangerous. Remember this: any sort of a sore, inflammation, or scarification, external or internal, which continues more than a few weeks, is an invitation to cancer. Therefore, get rid of it.”

“But suppose the injury is in the stomach, where it can’t be got at?” asked a member.

“Why can’t it be got at?” demanded Dr. Strong.

“How can it be got at?” retorted the questioner.

“By opening up the stomach and examining it.”

“Well, I don’t want anybody to open up *my* stomach just to see what is inside it!” declared Mrs. Sharpless vigorously.

“Very likely not. Perhaps you’d feel different if you’d had steady pain or indigestion for two or three years.”

“Does that mean cancer?” asked a tall, sallow woman anxiously.

## HOPE FOR THE HOPELESS

“Not by any means necessarily. But it may well mean gastric ulcer, and that may develop into cancer. Three fourths of the cases of carcinoma of the stomach which come into the surgeon’s hands have developed from gastric ulcer.”

“Is there no cure but the knife?” inquired Mrs. Clyde.

“Not for the cancer. For the gastric ulcer, yes. Careful medical care and diet often cure it. The trouble is that patients insist on diet and drugs in cases where they have proved themselves ineffectual. Those cases should come to the surgeon. But it will take long to educate the public to the significance of long-continued abdominal pain or indigestion. The knife is the last thing they are willing to think of.”

“But stomach operations are terribly dangerous, are n’t they?” inquired a member.

“Not any more. They were once. The operation for gastric ulcer in the early stage is simple. Even developed cancer of the stomach can be cured by the knife in from twenty-five to thirty per cent of the cases. Without the knife, it is sure death. I’m glad we got to the stomach first, because that is the most obscure and least hopeful of the common locations of the growth. In carcinoma of the breast, the most prevalent form among women, there is one simple, inclusive rule of prevention and cure. Any

## THE HEALTH MASTER

lump in the breast should be regarded, as Bloodgood of Johns Hopkins puts it, 'as an acute disease.' It should come out immediately. If such growths come at once to the surgeon, prevention and cure together would save probably ninety per cent of those who now die from this 'creeping death,' as our parents called it.

"Now, I'll ask you to imagine for the moment that I am conducting a clinic, for I'm not going to mince words in speaking of cancer of the womb, the next commonest form. Any persistent irritation there is a peril. If there is a slight, steady, and untimely discharge, that's a danger signal. The woman should at once have a microscopical examination made. This is simple, almost painless, and practically a sure determination of whether there is cancer or not. The thing to do is to find out."

"But if it is cancer, is there any chance?" asked the lady of the hatpin.

"Would you regard tuberculosis as hopeless?"

"Of course not."

"Your parents would have. But you have profited by popular education. If the public understood what to do in cancer as thoroughly as they know about tuberculosis, we'd save almost if not quite as many victims from the more terrible disease. Fatalism is as out of place in the one as in the other. The gist of the matter is taking the thing in

## HOPE FOR THE HOPELESS

time. Let me read you what the chairman of the Cancer Campaign Committee of the Congress of Surgeons of North America, Dr. Thomas S. Cullen, of Baltimore, says: "Surgeons are heartsick to see the many cancer patients begging for operations when the disease is so far advanced that nothing can be done. Cancer is in the beginning a local process and not a blood disease, and in its early stages can be completely removed. When the cancer is small the surgeon can, with one fourth the amount of labor, accomplish ten times the amount of good."

"Does that always mean the knife?" asked a timid-looking woman.

"Always. There is no other hope, once the malignant growth has begun. But the knife is not so terrible. In fact, in the early stages it is not terrible at all. Modern surgery has reduced pain to a minimum. The strongest argument against dread is a visit to a well-equipped surgical hospital, where one can see patients sitting up in bed and enjoying life a few days after a major operation. Even at the worst, the knife is less terrible than death, its certain alternative."

"Why do you call it the certain alternative?" asked the minister's wife. "I have seen facial cancer cured by concentrated ray treatment."

"That was n't cancer; it was lupus," replied Dr.

## THE HEALTH MASTER

Strong; "a wholly different thing. True cancer of the face in its commonest location, the lips, is the most frequently cured of any form, but only by operation. Now here's an interesting and suggestive point; taking lip-cancer patients as they come to us, we get perhaps sixty-five per cent of complete cures. With cancer of the womb, we get in all not more than forty per cent of recoveries. Perhaps some of you will be able to suggest the explanation for this contrast."

"Because cancer of the lip is n't as deadly a disease," ventured some one.

"Cancer is cancer, wherever it is located. Unless it is removed it is always and equally deadly."

"Then it is because the internal operation is so much more dangerous," offered another member.

"No; uterine operations are easy and simple. It is simply because the sore on the face is obvious, plain, unmistakable evidence of something wrong; and the patient ordinarily gets into the surgeon's hands early; that is, before the roots of the growth have spread and involved life itself. The difference in mortality between carcinoma of the lip and carcinoma of the womb is the difference between early operation and delayed operation. If uterine cancer or breast cancer were discovered as early as lip cancer, we'd save practically as many of the internal as we do of the external cases. And if all the lip-

## HOPE FOR THE HOPELESS

cancer cases were noticed at the first development, we'd save ninety-five per cent of them."

"Is n't it the business of the physician to find out about the internal forms?" asked Mrs. Sharpless.

"Often the physician has n't the chance. The woman ought to do the first diagnosing herself. That is, she must be taught to recognize suspicious symptoms. In Germany there has been a campaign of education among women on cancer of the womb. The result is that more than twice as many Germans come to the operating table, in time to give a fair chance of permanent recovery in this class of cases, as do Americans."

"How is the American woman, who knows nothing about such matters, to find out?" queried the minister's wife.

"There is a campaign of education now under way here. Publications giving the basic facts about cancer, its prevention and cure, in simple and popular form, can be had from the American Society for the Control of Cancer, — Thomas M. Debevoise, secretary, 62 Cedar Street, New York City; or more detailed advice can be had from the Cancer Campaign Committee of the Congress of Surgeons of North America, Dr. Thomas S. Cullen, chairman, 3 West Preston Street, Baltimore; or from Dr. F. R. Green, 535 Dearborn Avenue, Chicago, Illinois,

## THE HEALTH MASTER

secretary of the Council of Health and Public Instruction of the American Medical Association."

"Why not more easily and readily one's own physician?" asked Mrs. Clyde.

"Women don't go to their own physicians early enough. It is necessary that they be trained to understand symptoms which do not at first seem serious enough for medical attention. Besides, I regret to confess, in this matter of cancer our physicians need educating, too. They are too prone to say, if they are not sure of the diagnosis, 'Wait and see.' Waiting to see is what kills three fourths of the women who succumb to cancer. Let me illustrate this peril by two cases which have come under my observation: The wife of a lawyer in a Western city had a severe attack of stomach trouble. Her doctor, a young and open-minded man, had the courage to say, 'I don't know. But I'm afraid it's cancer. You'd better go to such-and-such a hospital and let them see.' The woman went. An exploratory incision was made and carcinoma found in the early stage. It was cut out and to-day she is as good as new.

"Now, this same lawyer had a friend who had been treated for months by a stomach specialist of some reputation. Under the treatment he had grown steadily thinner, paler, and weaker. 'Indigestion, gastric intoxication,' the specialist re-



## HOPE FOR THE HOPELESS

peated, parrotlike, until the man himself, in his misery, began to suspect. At this point the lawyer friend got hold of him and took him to the hospital where his wife had been. The surgeons refused the case and sent the man away to die. Indignant, the lawyer sought the superintendent of the hospital.

“‘Why won’t you take my friend’s case?’

“‘It is inoperable.’

“‘Is n’t it cancer of the stomach, like my wife’s?’

“‘Yes.’

“‘You cured my wife. Why can’t you cure my friend?’

“The official shook his head.

“‘I want an answer,’ insisted the lawyer.

“‘Well, frankly,’ said the other, ‘your wife’s physician knew his business. Your friend’s physician is a fool. He has killed his patient by delay.’

“Back home went the lawyer, and spread that story quietly. To-day the specialist’s practice is almost ruined; but he has learned an expensive lesson. The moral is this: If your doctor is doubtful whether your trouble is cancerous, and advises delay, get another doctor.

“Then, there is the ‘conservative’ type of practitioner, who is timid about making a complete job of his operation. One of this kind had the case of an acquaintance of mine who was stricken with cancer of the breast. The physician, under per-

## THE HEALTH MASTER

suasion of his patient, I presume, advised excising only the tumor itself, but the husband, who had been reading up on cancer, insisted on a radical operation. The entire breast was removed. A year later the woman's unmarried sister was afflicted in exactly the same way; but the discovery was made earlier, so that the case was a distinctly favorable one. The girl, however, would not consent to the radical operation, and the physician (the same man) declared it unnecessary. The tumor alone was cut out. The cancer reappeared and another operation was necessary. The girl died after cruel suffering. The married sister is alive, and, five years after the operation, as sound as a bell. That physician is a wiser man; also a sadder one. There's a special moral to this, too: the operator has but one chance; he must do his work thoroughly, or he might better not do it at all. When cancer returns after operation — which means that the roots were not eradicated — it is invariably fatal.

“Here are a few things which I want every one of you to remember. Had I had time I'd have had them printed for each of you to take home, so important do I think them: —

“No cancer is hopeless when discovered early.

“Most cancer, discovered early, is permanently curable.

## HOPE FOR THE HOPELESS

“The only cure is the knife.

“Medicines are worse than useless.

“Delay is more than dangerous; it is deadly.

“The one hope, and a strong one, is prompt and radical operation. A half-operation is worse than none at all.

“Most, if not all, cancer is preventable by correcting the minor difficulty from which it develops.

“With recognition of, and prompt action upon early symptoms, the death rate can be cut down at least a half; probably more.

“The fatalism which says: ‘If it’s cancer, I might as well give up,’ is foolish, cowardly, and suicidal.

“And, finally, here is some simple advice, intelligible to any thinking human being, which has been indorsed in printed form by the Congress of Surgeons of North America: —

“‘Be careful of persistent sores or irritations, external or internal.

“‘Be careful of yourself, without undue worry. At the first suspicious symptom go to some good physician and demand the truth. Don’t wait for pain to develop.

“‘If the doctor suspects cancer insist that he confirm or disprove his suspicions.

“‘Don’t be a hopeless fatalist. If it’s cancer face it bravely. With courage and prompt action the chances of recovery are all in your favor.

## THE HEALTH MASTER

“Don't defer an advised operation even for a day; and don't shrink from the merciful knife, when the alternative is the merciless anguish of slow death.’

“For the woman who fears the knife, Dr. Charles H. Mayo, one of the greatest of living surgeons, has spoken the final words: ‘The risk is not in surgery, but in *delayed surgery*.’

“I have said my say, ladies, and there are five minutes left. Has any one any further questions?”

There was none. But as he stepped down, Mrs. Sharpless whispered to him: “I watched them while you talked, and half of those women are thinking, and thinking *hard*.”

Six months thereafter, Mrs. Clyde came into the Health Master's office one day.

“I've just come from a sort of experience meeting of the Mothers' Club,” she said.

“What was the topic this time?” asked Dr. Strong.

“Aftermath.”

“Of what?”

“Your cancer talk.”

“Anything definite?”

“Definite, indeed! Between fifteen and twenty of the members went away from that meeting where you talked, suspecting themselves of cancer.”

## HOPE FOR THE HOPELESS

“That’s too many.”

“Yes. Ten of them had their fears set at rest right away.”

“I’m sorry to have frightened them; but one has to do a little harm in aiming at almost any good.”

“This was worth it. Half a dozen others had minor operations.”

“Perhaps saving major ones later.”

“Very likely. And four of them actually had cancer. Three out of the four are going to be well women. The fourth has an even chance. Dr. Strong, I don’t think you’ve done so good a day’s work since you brought health into this house.”

“I thank you,” said the doctor simply; “I think you are right. And you’ve given me the most profound and about the rarest satisfaction with which the physician is ever rewarded.”

“And that is?” she asked.

“The practical certainty of having definitely saved human life,” said the Health Master.

## IX

### THE GOOD GRAY DOCTOR

A TWENTY-DOLLAR bill! Crisp, fresh, and golden, it rose monumentally from the basis of nickels, dimes, and quarters which made up the customary collection of the Bairdstown Memorial Church. Even the generosity of the Clyde family, who, whenever they spent a week-end at Mr. Clyde's farm outside the little city, attended the Sunday services, looked meager and insignificant beside its yellow-backed splendor. Deacon Wilkes, passing the plate, gazed at it in fascination. Subsequent contributors surreptitiously touched it in depositing their own modest offerings, as if to make certain of its substance. It was even said at the Wednesday Sewing Circle that the Rev. Mr. Huddleston, from his eminence in the pulpit, had marked its colorful glint with an instant and benign eye and had changed the final hymn to one which specially celebrated the glory of giving.

In the Clyde pew also there was one who specially noted the donor, but with an expression far from benign. Dr. Strong's appraising glance ranged over the plump and glossy perfection of the

## THE GOOD GRAY DOCTOR

stranger, his symphonic grayness, beginning at his gray-suède-shod feet, one of which unobtrusively protruded into the aisle, verging upward through gray sock and trouser to gray frock coat, generously cut, and terminating at the neck gray head. Even the tall hat which the man dandled on his knees was gray. Against this Quakerish color-scheme the wearer's face stood out, large, pink, and heavy-jowled, lighted by restless brown eyes. His manner was at once important and reverent, and his "amen" a masterpiece of unction. No such impressive outlander had visited Bairdstown for many a moon.

After the service the visitor went forward to speak with Mr. Huddleston. At the same time Dr. Strong strolled up the aisle and contrived to pass the two so as to obtain a face-to-face view of the stranger.

"At nine o'clock to-morrow, then, and I shall be delighted to see you," the pastor was saying as Dr. Strong passed.

"Good-morning, Professor," said Dr. Strong, with an accent on the final word as slight as the nod which accompanied it.

"Good-morning! Good-morning!" returned the other heartily. But his glance, as it followed the man who had accosted him, was puzzled and not wholly untroubled.

## THE HEALTH MASTER

“Who is your munificent friend?” asked Mrs. Clyde, as the Health Master emerged from the church and joined her husband and herself in their car.

“When I last ran across him he called himself Professor Graham Gray, the Great Gray Benefactor,” replied Dr. Strong.

“Dresses the part, does n’t he?” observed Mr. Clyde. “Where was it that you knew him?”

“On the Pacific Coast, five years ago. He was then ‘itinerating’ — the quack term for traveling from place to place, picking up such practice as may be had by flamboyant advertising. Itinerating in eyes, as he would probably put it.”

“A wandering quack oculist?”

“Optician, rather, since he carried his own stock of glasses. In fact that’s where his profit came in. He advertised treatment free and charged two or three dollars for the glasses, special rates to school-children. The scheme is an old one and a devilish. Half of the children in San Luis Obispo County, where I chanced upon his trail, were wearing his vision-twisters by the time he was through with them.”

“What kind of glasses were they?”

“Sometimes magnifying lenses. Mostly just plain window glass. Few children escaped him, for



## THE GOOD GRAY DOCTOR

he would tell the parents that only prompt action could avert blindness."

"At least the plain glass could n't hurt the children," suggested Mrs. Clyde.

"Could n't it! It could n't fail to hurt them. Modify the sight of a delicate instrument like a child's eye continuously by the most transparent of barriers, and it is bound to go wrong soon. The magnifying glasses are far worse. There are hundreds of children in that one locality alone who will carry the stigma of his quackery throughout their lives."

"Do you think he is here with a view to practicing his amiable trade?" inquired Clyde.

"Only in part, if at all. I understand that he has changed his line."

"How comes he by all that showy money, then?"

"By murder."

The Clydes, accustomed to their physician's hammerstroke turns of speech, took this under consideration.

"But he was n't committing murder in the church just now, I suppose," insinuated Mrs. Clyde at length.

"Not directly. His immediate business there, I suspect, was bribery."

"Of whom?"

"The minister."

## THE HEALTH MASTER

“Oh, come, Strong!” protested Mr. Clyde. “Mr. Huddleston is n’t an intellectual giant, I grant you; but he’s certainly a well-meaning and honorable old fellow.”

“Some cynical philosopher has remarked that wicked men have a talent for doing harm, but fools have a genius. Mr. Huddleston’s goodness and honesty, taken in connection with his hopeless ignorance of human nature, are just so much capital to hand for a scoundrel like this Gray.”

“What does he expect to get for his twenty-dollar bill?”

“First, a reputation for piety and generosity. Second, that reputation duly certified to by the leading minister of the town.”

“In other words, a testimonial.”

“Precisely. For home use, and cheap at twenty dollars. Preparatory to operating in a town, your itinerating quack bribes two people — if he can. First, the editor of the local paper; second, the pastor of the leading church. The editor usually takes the money with his eyes wide open; the minister with his eyes tight shut.”

“How can his eyes be shut to such a business?” asked Mrs. Clyde.

“Because so much dust has been thrown in them by the so-called religious journals.”

“Surely you don’t mean that religious journals

## THE GOOD GRAY DOCTOR

exploit quackery in their pages!" cried Mrs. Clyde.

"They are the mainstay of the quack and patent medicine business," declared the Health Master. "Leaving out the Christian Science papers, which, of course, don't touch this dirty money, the religious press of all denominations, with a few honorable individual exceptions, sells out to any form of medical fraud which has a dollar to spend. Is it strange that the judgment of some of the clergy, who implicitly trust in their sectarian publications, becomes distorted? It's an even chance that our Great Gray faker's advertisement is in the religious weekly which lies on Mr. Huddleston's study-table at this moment."

Grandma Sharpless turned around from her seat in front, where she always ensconced herself so that, as she put it, she could see what was coming in time to jump. "I know it is," she stated quietly. "For while I was waiting in the parsonage last week I picked up the 'Church Pillar' and saw it there."

"Trust Grandma Sharpless's eyes not to miss anything that comes within their range," said Dr. Strong.

"Well, I missed the sense of that advertisement till just now," retorted the old lady. "I've just remembered about this Graham Gray."

"What about him?" asked the Health Master

## THE HEALTH MASTER

with eagerness, for Mrs. Sharpless's memory was as reliable for retaining salient facts as her vision was for discerning them. "Do you know him?"

"Only by his works. Last year a traveling doctor of that name stopped over at Greenvale, twenty miles down the river, and gave some of his lectures to Suffering Womanhood, or some such folderol. He got hold of Sally Griffin, niece of our farmer here, while she was visiting there. Sally's as sound as a pippin, except for an occasional spell of fool-in-the-head, and I guess no school of doctoring ever helps that common ailment much. Well, this Gray got her scared out of her wits with symptoms, and sold her twenty-five dollars' worth of medicine to cure her of something or other she did n't have. Cured!" sniffed the lively narrator. "If I had n't taken the stuff away from her and locked it up, I expect she'd be in the churchyard by now."

"The whole philosophy of quackery explicated and punctured, by one who knows," chuckled Dr. Strong.

"None of your palaver with me, young man!" returned the brisk old lady, who was devoted to the Health Master, and showed it by a policy of determined opposition of the letter and whole-hearted support of the spirit and deed, in all things. "Probably he knows as much as most of your regular doctors, at that!"

## THE GOOD GRAY DOCTOR

“At least he seems to know human nature. That’s the strong point of the charlatan. But have you got any of his medicine left?”

“Yes; I think I can lay my hands on what’s left of it. I remember that Sally boohooed like a baby, grown woman that she is, when I took it away from her.” Dr. Strong’s eyebrows went up sharply. “As soon as we get to the house I’ll look it up.”

On their arrival at the roomy old farmstead which Mr. Clyde had remodeled and modernized for what he called “an occasional three days of grace” from his business in the city of Worthington, Grandma Sharpless set about the search, and presently came to the living-room bearing in one hand a large bottle and in the other a newspaper.

“Since you’re interested in Professor Gray,” she said, “here’s what he says about himself in yesterday’s ‘Bairdstown Bugle.’ I do think,” she added, “that the Honorable Silas Harris might be in better business with his paper than publishing such truck as this. Listen to it.

### GOSPEL HERBS WILL CURE YOUR ILLS

Women of Bairdstown; Read your Bible! Revelation 22d chapter, 2d verse. God promises that “the Herbs of the field shall heal the nations.” In a vision from above, the holy secret has been revealed to me. Alone of all men, I can brew this miracle-working elixir.

## THE HEALTH MASTER

“The blasphemous old slinkum!” Grandma Sharpless interrupted herself to say angrily. “He does n’t even quote the Scriptures right!”

“Oh, blasphemy is a small matter for a rascal of his kind,” said the Health Master lightly. “Go on.”

She read on: —

Come to me, ye women who suffer, and I will give you relief. All those wasting and wearing ailments from which the tender sex suffers, vanish like mist before the healing, revivifying influence of Gospel Herbs. Supposed incurable diseases: Rheumatism, Dropsy, Diabetes and all kidney ills, Stomach Trouble, Scrofula, Blood Poison, even the dreaded scourge, Consumption, yield at once to this remedy.

Though my special message is to women, I will not withhold this boon from any suffering human. Come one and all, rich and poor, young and old, of either sex. Your money refunded if I do not cure you. Public meeting Monday and Tuesday evenings, at eight o’clock sharp in the Scatcherd Opera House; admission free to all. Private consultation at the Mallory Hotel, Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday from 10 A.M. to 4 P.M. Remember, I cure where the doctors fail; or no pay.

PROF. GRAHAM GRAY,  
The Great Gray Benefactor.

Mrs. Sharpless held out for the general view the advertisement, which occupied, in huge type, two thirds of a page of the “Bugle.” The remainder of the page was taken up with testimonials to the

## THE GOOD GRAY DOCTOR

marvelous effects of the Gospel Herbs. Most of the letters were from far-away towns, but there were a few from the general vicinity of Bairdsville.

Meantime Dr. Strong had been delicately tasting and smelling the contents of the bottle, which were thick and reddish.

“What do you make out is in it?” asked Clyde.

“Death — and a few worse things. Grandma Sharpless, you say that the girl cried for this after you took it from her?”

“Not only that; she wrote to the Professor for more. And when it came I smashed the bottle.”

“You ought to have the honorary degree of M.D. Well, it’s pretty plain, but to make sure I’ll send this to Worthington for an analysis.”

“So our friend, the gray wolf, is going to prowl in Bairdstown for the next three days!” Thomas Clyde began to rub his chin softly; then not so softly; and presently quite hard. His wife watched him with troubled eyes. When his hand came down to rest upon his knee, it was doubled into a very competent-looking fist. His face set in the expression which the newspapers of his own city had dubbed, after the tenement campaign of the year before, “Clyde’s fighting smile.”

“Oh, Tom!” broke out his wife, “what kind of trouble are you going to get into now?”

## THE HEALTH MASTER

“Trouble?” repeated the head of the family, in well-simulated surprise. “Why, dear, I was n’t even thinking of trouble — for myself. But I believe it is time for a little action. Let’s call this a household meeting” (this was one of the established methods of the Clyde clan) “and find out. As it is n’t a family affair, we won’t call in the children this time. Strong, what, if anything, are we going to do about this stranger in our midst? Are we going to let him take us in?”

“The question is,” said Dr. Strong quickly, “whether the Clyde family is willing to loan its subsidized physician temporarily to the city of Bairdstown.”

“On the Chinese plan,” supplemented Clyde.

“Certainly. On the Chinese plan of trying to save the community from a visitation instead of waiting to cure them of the incurable results of it.”

“By visitation I suppose you mean Professor Gray?” said Mrs. Sharpless.

“Exactly. I should rank him rather higher than an epidemic of scarlet fever, as an ally of damage and death.”

“I’ll vote ‘Yes,’” said Mrs. Clyde rather plaintively. “Only, I wish you two men did n’t have so much Irish in your temperament.”

“I scorn your insinuation,” replied her husband. “I’m the original dove of peace, but this Gray



## THE GOOD GRAY DOCTOR

person ruffles my plumage. What do you say, Grandma?"

"Bairdstown is my own place, partly. I know the people and they know me and I won't sit quiet and see 'em put upon. I vote 'Yes.'"

"Make it unanimous!" said Clyde. "What's the first move of the army of relief? I'm in on this somewhere, Strong."

"Contribute your car for a couple of days, then, and we'll go out on a still hunt for the elusive clue and the shy and retiring evidence. In other words, we'll scour the county, and look up some of these local testimonials which the Great Gray One gathered in last year, and now prints in the 'Bugle.'"

"And I'll stop in town and see Mr. Huddleston to-morrow," said Mrs. Sharpless.

"You won't get any results," prophesied the Health Master. "But, anyway, get him to come to the Gray lecture on Tuesday evening. We'll need him."

During the ensuing two and a half days and two nights Mrs. Clyde had speech of her husband but once; and that was at 2 A.M. when he woke her up to tell her that he was having the time of his life, and she replied by asking him whether he had let the cat in, and returned to her dreams.

Bairdstown's Suffering Womanhood — as per advertisement — turned out extensively and self-

## THE HEALTH MASTER

commiseratingly to the free lecture of Tuesday evening, bringing with them a considerable admixture of the male populace, curious, cynical, or expectant. On the platform sat a number of "special guests," including the Rev. Mr. Huddleston, mild of face and white of hair, and the Honorable Silas Harris, owner of the "Bugle." "Cured" patients, to the number of half a dozen, fidgeted in the seats of honor with expressions of conscious and pleasurable importance.

"They appear to be enjoying poor health quite literally," whispered Clyde to Dr. Strong, as the two, begrimed with the dust of a long day's travel just finished, slipped quietly into side seats.

At once the entertainment began. A lank, harsh-faced, muscular man whom Professor Gray introduced as his assistant, seated himself at the piano, and struck a chord, whereupon the Professor, in a powerful voice, sang what he termed the "Hymn of Healing," inviting the audience to "assist" in the chorus, which gem of poesy ran as follows:—

"Ye shall be healed! Ye shall be healed!  
Trust in the gospel advice.  
Cured by the herbs of the wood and the field;  
Healed without money or price."

"Some poetic license in that last line," murmured Clyde to his companion.

"The next portion of our programme," an-

## THE GOOD GRAY DOCTOR

nounced the Great Gray Benefactor, "will be corroborative readings from the Good Book." And he proceeded to deliver in oratorical style sundry Bible quotations so patched together and garbled as to ascribe, inferentially, miraculous powers to the Gospel Herbs. Then came the lecture proper, which was merely an amplification of the "Bugle" advertisement, interspersed with almanac funny stories and old jokes.

"And now, before our demonstration," concluded Professor Graham Gray, "if there is any here seeking enlightenment or help, let him rise. This is your meeting, dear friends, as much as mine; free to your voices and your needs, as well as to your welcome presence here. I court inquiry and fair investigation. Any questions? If not, we —"

"One moment!" The whole assemblage turned, as on a single pivot, to the side aisle where Dr. Strong had risen and now stood, tall, straight, and composed, waiting for silence.

"Our friend on the right has the floor," said the Professor suavely.

"You state that this God-given secret remedy was imparted to you for the relief of human misery?" asked Dr. Strong.

"Thousands of grateful patients attest it, my friend."

"Then, with human beings suffering and dying

## THE HEALTH MASTER

all about you, why do you continue to profit by keeping it secret?"

Down sat the questioner. A murmur rose and ran, as the logic of the question struck home. But the quack had his answer pat.

"Does not the Good Book say that the laborer is worthy of his hire? Do your regular physicians, of whom I understand you are one, treat cases for nothing? Ah," he went on, outstretching his hands to the audience with a gesture of appeal, "the injustice which I have suffered from the jealousy and envy of the medical profession! Never do I enter a town without curing many unfortunates that the regular doctors have given up as hopeless. Hence the violence of their attacks upon me. But I forgive them their prejudice, as I pity their ignorance."

Some applause followed the enunciation of this noble sentiment.

"We have with us to-night," pursued the speaker, quick to catch the veering sentiment, "a number of these marvelous cures. You shall hear from the very mouths of the saved ones testimony beyond cavil. I will call first on Mrs. Amanda Gryce, wife of Mr. Stanley Gryce, the well and favorably known laundryman. Speak up clearly, Mrs. Gryce, and tell your story."

"It's two years now that I been doctorin'," said the lady thus adjured, in a fluttering voice. "I

## THE GOOD GRAY DOCTOR

doctored with a allopathic physician here, an' with a homypath over to Roxton, an' with a osty-path down to Worthington, an' with Peruny in betwixt, an' they did n't any of 'em do me no good till I tried Professor Gray. He seen how I felt without askin' me a question. He just pulled down my eyelid an' looked at it. 'You're all run down; gone!' says he. An' thet's jest what I was. So he treated me with his herb medicine an' I feel like a new woman. An' I give Professor Graham Gray the credit an' the thanks of a saved woman."

"Not to mention seven dollars an' a half," supplemented a mournful drawl from the audience.

"You hush, Stan Gryce!" cried the healed one, shrill above the laughter of the ribald. "Would you begrutch a few mizzable dollars for your poor, sufferin' wife's health?"

An alarmed child of ten was next led forward and recited in sing-song measure: —

"I — had — the — fits — for — most — three — years — and — I — was — cured — by — Gospel — Herbs — and — I — have — come — here — to — say — God — bless — my — dear — benefactor — Professor — Graham — Gray," — and sat down hard at the last word, whereupon a tenor squeak in the far gallery took up the refrain: —

"You'd scarcex peckwon of my yage  
To speakin public on the stage."

## THE HEALTH MASTER

Again there was a surge of mirth, and the lecturer frowned with concern. But he quickly covered whatever misgivings he might have had by bringing forward other "testimonies": old Miss Smithson whose nervousness had been quite dispelled by two doses of the herbs; Auntie Thomas (colored) whose "misery" had vanished before the wonder-working treatment; and the Widow Carlin, whose boy had been "spittin' blood like as if he was churchyard doomed," but had n't had a bad coughing spell since taking the panacea. And all this time Dr. Strong sat quiet in his seat, with a face of darkening sternness.

"You have heard your fellow-citizens," the lecturer took up his theme again, "testify to the efficacy of my methods. And you see on this rostrum with me that grand and good old man, the worthy pastor of so many of you, my dear and honored friend — I feel that I may call him friend, since I have his approval of my humble labors — the Reverend Doctor Huddleston. You see also here, lending the support of his valued presence, the Honorable Silas Harris, whom you have twice honored by sending him to the state legislature. Their presence is the proudest testimonial to my professional character. In Mr. Harris's fearless and independent journal you have read the sworn evidence of those who have been cured by my God-

## THE GOOD GRAY DOCTOR

given remedies; evidence which is beyond challenge —”

“I challenge it.”

Dr. Strong, who had been hopefully awaiting some such opening, was on his feet again.

“You have had your say!” cried Professor Gray, menacing him with a shaking hand. “These people don’t want to hear you. They understand your motives. You can’t run this meeting.”

The gesture was a signal. The raw-boned accompanist, whose secondary function was that of bouncer, made a quick advance from the rear, reached for the unsuspecting Health Master—and recoiled from the impact of Mr. Thomas Clyde’s solid shoulder so sharply that only the side wall checked his subsidence.

“Better stay out of harm’s way, my friend,” suggested Clyde amiably.

Immediately the hall was in an uproar. The more timid of the women were making for the exits, when a high, shrill voice, calling for order strenuously, quelled the racket, and a very fat man waddled down the middle aisle, to be greeted by cries of “Here’s the Mayor.” Several excited volunteers explained the situation to him from as many different points of view, while Professor Graham Gray bellowed his appeal from the platform.

## THE HEALTH MASTER

"All I want is fair play. They're trying to break up my meeting."

"Not at all," returned Dr. Strong's calm voice. "I'm more than anxious to have it continue."

With a happy inspiration, Mr. Clyde jumped up on his bench.

"I move Mayor Allen take the chair!" he shouted. "Professor Gray says that he courts fair investigation. Let's give it to him, in order."

A shout of acclaim greeted this suggestion. Bairdstown's Suffering Womanhood and Bored Manhood was getting more out of a free admission than it had ever had in its life before. Ponderously the obese Mayor hoisted his weight up the steps and shook hands with the reluctant lecturer. He then invited Dr. Strong to come to the platform.

"This is my meeting!" protested the Great Gray Benefactor. "I hired this hall and paid good money for it."

"You said it was our meeting as much as yours!" roared an insurgent from the crowd, and a chorus of substantiation followed.

"Ten minutes will be all that I want," announced Dr. Strong as he took a chair next the Mayor.

"That's fair!" shrilled the Chairman. "On the Professor's own invitation." In a tone lowered to the alarmed quack's ear, he added: "Of course, you can back out if you want to. But I'd advise



## THE GOOD GRAY DOCTOR

you to do it quick if you're going to do it at all. This is a queer-tempered town."

So significant was his tone that the other judged advance to be safer than retreat. Therefore, summoning all his assurance, he sought, in an impassioned speech, to win back his hearers. He was a natural orator, and, when he reached his peroration, he had a large part of his audience with him again. In the flush of renewed confidence he made a grave tactical error, just when he should have closed.

"Let this hireling of the Doctors' Trust, the trust that would strangle all honest competition, answer these if he can!" he shouted, shaking the page of testimonials before his adversary's face. "Let him confute the evidence of these good and honorable women who have appeared here to-night; women who have no selfish aims to subserve. Let him impugn the motives of the reverend clergyman and of the honored statesman who sit here with me. Let him do this, or let him shrink from this hall in the shame and dishonor which he seeks to heap upon one whose sole ambition it is to relieve suffering and banish pain and death."

There was hearty applause as the speaker sat down and Dr. Strong arose to face a gathering now turned for the most part hostile. He wasted no time in introduction or argument. "Mr. Chairman," said he, "Professor Gray rests his case on his testi-

## THE HEALTH MASTER

monials. With Mr. Clyde I have investigated a number of them, and will give you my results. Here are half a dozen testimonials to the value of one of his nostrums, the Benefaction Pills, from women who have been cured, so they state, of diseases ranging from eczema through indigestion to consumption. All, please note, by the same wonderful medicine. And here," he drew a small box from his pocket, "is a sample of the medicine. I have just had it analyzed. What do you suppose they are? Sugar! Just plain sugar and nothing else."

Professor Gray leaped to his feet. "You don't deny the cures!" he thundered.

"I don't deny that these people are well to-day. And I don't deny that the testimonials from them are genuine, as documents. But your sugar pills had no more to do with the cure than so much moonshine. Listen, you people! Here is the core and secret of quackery:

"All diseases tend to cure themselves, through the natural resistance of the body. But for that we should all be dead. This man, or some other of his kind, comes along with his promises and pills, and when the patient recovers from the disease in the natural course of events, he claims the credit. Meantime, he is selling sugar at about one hundred dollars per pound."

"Sugar," said the quack, quick-wittedly. "But

## THE GOOD GRAY DOCTOR

what kind of sugar? This sugar, as he calls it, is crystal precipitated from the extract of these healing herbs. No chemist can determine its properties by any analysis."

"Very well turned," said Dr. Strong, with a smile. "I can't immediately disprove that, though I could with time. But, whatever the case with his sugar, any chemist can analyze this." He held up a small bottle, half filled with a red-brown liquid. "This is the Extract of Gospel Herbs. Now, let us see what this does."

He referred to his copy of the "Bugle," containing the testimonials. "Here is Mrs. Sarah Jenkins, of the neighboring town of Maresco, where Professor Gray lectured a year ago, cured of Bright's disease and dropsy; Miss Allie Wheat, of Weedsport, cured of cancer of the stomach; and Mrs. Howard Cleary, of Roxton, wholly relieved of nervous breakdown and insomnia. All genuine testimonials. Mr. Clyde and I have traced them."

Professor Gray raised his head with a flash of triumph. "You see!" he cried. "He has to admit the genuineness of my testimonials!"

"Of your testimonials; yes. But what about your cures? Mrs. Jenkins has, as she said, ceased to suffer from her ills. She died of Bright's disease and dropsy three months after Professor Gray cured her of them. Miss Wheat, whose cancer was

## THE HEALTH MASTER

purely imaginary, is now a hopeless wreck, in a sanitarium whither the Gospel Herbs drove her. Mrs. Cleary — but let me read what she testified to. Here it is in the paper with a picture of the Cleary home: —

DEAR PROFESSOR GRAY: You have indeed been a benefactor to me. Before our baby was born my husband and I were the happiest of couples. Then I became a nervous wreck. I could n't sleep. I was cross and irritable. My nerves seemed all on fire. Your first treatment worked wonders. I slept like a log. Since then I have not been without Gospel Herbs in the house, and I am a well woman.

(Signed) MRS. HOWARD CLEARY.

“That was a year ago,” continued Dr. Strong. “Yesterday we visited the Cleary home. We found a broken husband and a deserted baby. The young wife we traced to Worthington, where we discovered her — well, I won't name to this audience the sort of place we found her in.

“But so far as there can be a hell on this earth, she had descended into it, and this,” he held the vial high to view, “*this* sent her there.” His fingers opened; there was a crisp little crash of glass, and the red-brown liquid crept and spread along the floor, like blood.

“Morphine,” said Dr. Strong. “Morphine, which enslaves the body and destroys the soul. There are your Gospel Herbs!”

## THE GOOD GRAY DOCTOR

A murmur rose, and deepened into a growl. The Great Gray Benefactor, his face livid, sprang forward.

“Lies!” he shouted. “All lies! Where’s his proof? What’s he got to show? Nothing but his own say-so. If there’s a law in the land, I’ll make him sweat for this. Mr. Huddleston, I appeal to you for justice.”

“We shall be glad to hear from the Reverend Mr. Huddleston,” mildly suggested the chairman, who was evincing an enjoyment of the proceedings quite puzzling to Dr. Strong.

The old clergyman got slowly to his feet. His mild, weak face was troubled. “Let us bear and forbear,” he pleaded in a tremulous voice. “I cannot believe these charges against our good friend, Professor Gray. I am sure that he is a good and worthy man. He has given most liberally to the church. I am informed that he is a member of his home church in good and regular standing, and I find in the editorial columns of the ‘Church Pillar’ a warm encomium upon his beneficent work, advising all to try his remedies. Surely our friend, Dr. Strong, has been led astray by mistaken zeal.

“Only yesterday two members of my congregation, most estimable ladies, called to see me and told me how they had benefited by a visit just made to Professor Gray. He had treated them with his

## THE HEALTH MASTER

new Gospel Elixir, of which he has spoken to me. There was evidence of its efficacy in their very bearing and demeanor —”

“I should say there was! *And* in their breath. Did you smell it?”

The interruption came in a very clear, positive, and distinct contralto.

“Great Grimes’s grass-green ghost!” exclaimed Mr. Thomas Clyde, quite audibly amidst the startled hush. “Grandma Sharpless is among those present!”

“I — I — I — I do not think,” began the clergyman, aghast, “that the matter occurred to me.”

“Because, if *you* did n’t, *I* did,” continued the voice composedly. “They reeked of liquor.”

The tension to which the gathering had been strung abruptly loosened in mirth.

“Mrs. Sharpless will please take the platform,” invited the Mayor-chairman.

“No, I’ll do my talking from here.” The old lady stood up, a straight, solid, uncompromising figure, in the center of the floor. “I met those two ladies in the parsonage hall,” she explained. “They were coming out as I was going in. They stopped to talk to me. They both talked at once. I would n’t want to say that they were — well — exactly —”

“Spifflicated,” suggested a helpful voice from the far rear.

## THE GOOD GRAY DOCTOR

“Spifflicated ; thank you,” accepted the speaker.  
“But they certainly were —”

“Lit up,” volunteered another first-aid to the hesitant.

“Yes, lit up. One of them loaned me her bottle. If I’m any judge of bad whiskey, that was it.”

An appreciative roar from the house testified to the fact that Mrs. Sharpless had her audience in hand.

“As for you women on the stage,” she pursued, rising to her topic, “I know what’s wrong with you. ’Mandy Gryce, if you’d tend more to your house and less to your symptoms, you would n’t be fitting from allopathic bud to homœopathic flower like a bumblebee with the stomach-ache.” (“Hear, hear!” from Mr. Gryce.) “Lizzie Tompy, your fits are nine tenths temper. I’d cure you of ’em without morphine. Miss Smithson, if you’d quit strong green tea, three times a day, those nerves of yours would give you a fairer chance—and your neighbors, too.” (Tearful sniffs from Miss Smithson.)

“Auntie Thomas, you wait and see what your rheumatism says to you to-morrow, when the dope has died out of your system. Susan Carlin, you ought to be home this minute, looking after your sick boy, instead of on a stage, in your best bib and tucker, giving testimonials to you-don’t-know-what-all poison.

## THE HEALTH MASTER

“Bairdstown’s Suffering Womanhood!” exclaimed the vigorous old lady, her color rising with her voice. “Go home! Go home, you poor, self-coddling fussybuddies, to your washboards and your sewing-machines and forget your imaginary symptoms.

“There!” she drew a long breath, looking about over the group of wilting testimonial-givers. “That’s the first speech I have ever made, and I guess it’ll be the last. But before I stop, I’ve got a word to say to you, Professor Graham Gray. Bless us! Where’s the man gone?”

“Professor Gray,” announced the chairman with a twinkle in his voice, “has retired to obtain fresh evidence. At least, that is what he *said* he had gone for.”

From the main floor came a hoarse suggestion which had the words “tar and feathers” in it. It was cut short by a metallic shriek from without, followed by a heavy rumbling.

“Something seems to tell me,” said the fat Mayor solemnly, “that the 9.30 express, which just whistled for the crossing, is the heavier by about two hundred pounds of Great Gray Benefactor clinging to the rear platform, and happy to be there.”

“And your money back if not benefited,” piped a reedy voice from the front, whereupon there was another roar.



## THE GOOD GRAY DOCTOR

“The bright particular star of these proceedings having left, is there anything else to come before the meeting?” inquired the chairman.

“I’d like to have one more word,” said Dr. Strong. “Friends, as one quack is, all quacks are. They differ only in method and degree. Every one of them plays a game with stacked cards, in which you are his victims, and Death is his partner. And the puller-in for this game is the press.

“You have heard to-night how a good and well-meaning clergyman has been made stool-pigeon for this murderous charlatan, through the lying of a religious — God save the mark! — weekly. That publication is beyond our reach. But there is one here at home which did the quack’s work for him, and took his money for doing it. I suggest that the Honorable Silas Harris explain!”

“I’m running my paper as a business proposition,” growled the baited editor and owner of the “Bugle,” “and I’m running it to suit myself and this community.”

“You’re running it to suit the crooked and cruel advertisers who prey on this community,” retorted the other. “And you’ve served them further in the legislature, where you voted to kill the patent-medicine bill, last session, in protection of your own profits. Good profits, too. One third of all your advertising is medical quackery which takes good

## THE HEALTH MASTER

money out of this town by sheer swindling; money which ought to stay in town and be spent on the legitimate local products advertised in your paper. If I were a local advertiser, I'd want to know why."

"If that's the case," remarked Mr. Stanley Gryce, quick to catch the point, "I guess you owe my family seven dollars an' a half, Silas, and till it's paid up you can just drop my laundry announcement out of your columns."

"I guess I'll stay out for a spell, too," supplemented Mr. Corson, the hay and feed man. "For a week, my ad's been swamped by Swamp Root so deep you can't see it."

"While you're about it," added a third, "leave me out. I'm kinder sick of appearin' between a poisonous headache powder and a consumption dope. Folks'll be accusin' me of seekin' trade untimely." This was greeted with a whoop, for the speaker was the local undertaker.

"We've got a league for Clean Advertising in Worthington," announced Mr. Clyde. "Why not organize something of the kind here?"

"Help!" shouted the Honorable Silas, throwing up his hands. "Don't shoot! I holler 'Enough!' As soon as the contracts are out, I'll quit. There's no money in patent-medicine advertising any more for the small paper, anyway."

## THE GOOD GRAY DOCTOR

“Well, we’ve done our evening’s chores, I reckon,” remarked the chairman. “A motion to adjourn will now be in order.”

“Move we adjourn with the chorus of the ‘Hymn of Healing,’” piped the wag with the reedy voice, and the audience filed out, uproariously and profanely singing:—

“Ye shall be healed! Ye shall be healed!  
Trust in the gospel advice.  
Cured by the herbs of the wood and the field;  
Healed without money or price.”

“Well, young man,” said Grandma Sharpless, coming forward to join the Health Master, “you certainly carried out your programme.”

“I?” said Dr. Strong, affectionately tucking the old lady’s arm under his. “To you the honors of war. I only squelched a quack. You taught Bairdstown’s self-coddling womanhood a lesson that will go down the generations.”

“What I want to know,” said the Mayor, advancing to shake hands with Mrs. Sharpless, “is this: what’s a fussybuddy?”

“A fussybuddy,” instructed Grandma Sharpless wisely, “is a woman who catches a stomach-ache from a patent-medicine almanac. What I want to know, Tom Allen, is what you had against the man. I seemed to get an inkling that you did n’t exactly like him.”

## THE HEALTH MASTER

“He’s forgotten me,” chuckled the Mayor, “but I haven’t forgotten him. Fifteen years ago he came along here horse-doctoring and poisoned a perfectly good mare for me. He won’t try to poison this town again in a hurry. You finished him, Mrs. Sharpless, you and Dr. Strong.”

“What *I* want to know,” said the Health Master, “is how poor old Mr. Huddleston feels about that contribution, now.”

A month later he found out. Traveling by trolley one evening, he felt a hand on his shoulder, and turned to face Professor Graham Gray.

“No hard feelings, I hope,” said the quack with superb urbanity. “All in the way of business, I take it. I’d have done the same to you, if you’d come butting in on my trade. Say, but that old lady was a Tartar! She cooked my goose in Bairdstown. For all that, I got an unsolicited testimonial from there two weeks ago that’s a wonder. Anonymous, too. Not a word of writing with it to tell who the grateful patient might be.”

“What was it?” asked Dr. Strong with polite interest.

“A twenty-dollar bill. Now, *what* do you think of that?”

When Dr. Strong spoke again — and the Great Gray Benefactor has always regarded this as the most inconsequential reply he ever received to a

## THE GOOD GRAY DOCTOR

plain question — it was after a long and thoughtful pause.

“I think,” said he with conviction, “that I’ll start in going to church again, next Sunday.”

## X

### THE HOUSE THAT CAUGHT COLD

“CAN you cure a cold?” asked Grandma Sharpless.

A flare from the soft-coal fire flickered across the library, revealing a smile on the Health Master’s face.

“Am I a millionaire?” he countered.

“Not from your salary as Chinese physician to the Clydes,” laughed the head of that family.

“If I could cure a cold, I should be, easily, more than that. I’d be the foremost medical discoverer of the day.”

“Then you can’t cure a cold,” pursued Mrs. Sharpless.

“What *is* a cold?” countered the Health Master in that insinuating tone of voice which he employed to provoke the old lady into one of those frequent verbal encounters so thoroughly enjoyed by both of them.

“An ordinary common cold in the head. You know what I mean perfectly well, young man. The kind you catch by getting into drafts.”

“Oh, *that!* Well, you see, there’s no such thing.”

“No such thing as a cold in the head, Dr.

## THE HOUSE THAT CAUGHT COLD

Strong?" said Julia, looking up from her book. "Why, we've all had 'em, loads of times."

"And Bettina is coming down with one now, if I'm any judge," said Mrs. Sharpless. "She's had the sniffles all day."

"Let's hope it is n't a cold. Maybe it's only chicken-pox or mumps."

"Are you wishing chicken-pox and mumps on my baby?" cried Mrs. Clyde.

In the three years during which Dr. Strong had been the "Chinese physician" of the household, earning his salary by keeping his patients well instead of curing them when ill, Mrs. Clyde had never quite learned to guard against the surprises which so often pointed the Health Master's truths.

"Not by any means; I'm only hoping for the lesser of evils."

"But mumps and chicken-pox are real diseases," protested Clyde.

"And you think that a 'cold,' as you call it, is n't."

"Why, no," said Clyde hesitantly. "I would n't call it a disease, any more than I'd call a sprain a broken leg."

"But it is. A very real, serious disease. Its actual name is coryza."

"Bogy-talk," commented Grandma Sharpless scornfully. "Big names for little things."

## THE HEALTH MASTER

“Not a little thing at all, as we should all realize if our official death-records really dealt in facts.”

“Death-records?” said Grandma Sharpless incredulously. “People don’t die of colds, do they?”

“Hundreds every year; all around us.”

“Well, *I* never hear of it.”

“Are you sure? Think back and recall how many of your friends’ obituary notices include some such sentence as this: ‘Last Thursday evening Mr. Smith caught a severe cold, from which he took to his bed on Saturday, and did not leave it again until his death yesterday morning?’ Does n’t that sound familiar?”

“So familiar,” cried Mr. Clyde, “that I believe the newspapers keep it set up in type.”

“But the newspaper always goes on to say that Mr. Smith developed pneumonia or grip or bronchitis, and died of that, not of the cold,” objected Mrs. Sharpless.

“Oh, yes. In the mortality records poor Smith usually appears under the heading of one of the well-recognized diseases. It would hardly be respectable to die of a cold, would it?”

“He does n’t *die* of the cold,” insisted the old lady. “He catches the cold and dies of something else.”

“If I take a dose of poison,” the Health Master



## THE HOUSE THAT CAUGHT COLD

mildly propounded, "and fall down and break my neck, what do I die of?"

"It's no parallel," said Grandma Sharpless. "And even if it is," she added, tacitly abandoning that ground, "we've always had colds and we always will have 'em."

"Not with my approval, at least," remarked the Health Master.

"I guess Providence won't wait for your approval, young man."

"Then you regard coryza as a dispensation of Providence? The Presbyterian doctrine of foreordination, applied to the human nose," smiled the physician. "We're all predestined to the ailment, and therefore might as well get out our handkerchiefs and prepare to sneeze our poor sinful heads off. Is that about it?"

"No, it is n't! This is a green December and it means a full churchyard. We're in for a regular cold-breeding season."

"Nonsense! Weather does n't breed colds."

"What does, then?"

"A very mean and lively little germ. He's rather more poisonous than the chicken-pox and mumps variety, although he has n't as bad a name. In grown-ups he prepares the soil, so to speak, for other germs, by getting all through the system and weakening its resistant powers, thereby laying it

## THE HEALTH MASTER

open to the attacks of such enemies as the pneumococcus, which is always waiting just around the corner of the tongue to give us pneumonia. Or bronchitis may develop, or tonsillitis, or diphtheria, or kidney trouble, or indeed almost anything. I once heard an eminent lecturer happily describe the coryza bacillus as the bad little boy of the gang who, having once broken into the system, turns around and calls back to the bigger boys: 'Come on in, fellers. The door's open.'

"With children the coryza-bug makes various trouble without necessarily inviting the others in. A great proportion of the serious ear-troubles come from colds; all the way from earache to mastoiditis, and the consequent necessity of quick operations to save the patient's life. Almost any of the organs may be impaired by the activity of the little pest. And yet as intelligent a family as this" — he looked around the circle — "considers it a 'mere cold.'"

"Why have n't you told us before?" asked Mr. Clyde bluntly.

"A just reproach," admitted the Health Master. "Not having been attacked, I have n't considered defense — a wretched principle in health matters. In fact, I've let the little matters of life go, too much, in my interest in the bigger."

"But what about Bettina?" said the mother anxiously.

## THE HOUSE THAT CAUGHT COLD

“Let’s have her in,” said the Health Master, and the six-year-old presently trotted into the room, announcing through a somewhat reddened nose,

“I’m all stobbed ub; and Katie rubbed me with goose-grease, and I don’d wand to take any paregoric.”

“Paregoric?” said the physician. “Opium? I guess not. Off to bed with you, Toots, and we’ll try to exorcise the demon with hot-water bottles and extra blankets.”

Following her usual custom of kissing everybody good-night around the circle, Bettina held up her arms to her sister, who was nearest.

“Stop!” said the Health Master. “No kissing.”

“Not even my mamma?” queried the child.

“I’m afraid not. You remember when Charley had scarlet fever he was n’t allowed even to be very near any of you.”

“But scarlet fever is the most contagious of any of the diseases, is n’t it?” asked Julia.

“Not as contagious as a cold in the head.”

“I don’t know how contagious a cold is,” said Grandma Sharpless; “but I do know this: once it gets into a house, it goes through it like wildfire.”

“Then the house ought to be ashamed of itself. That’s sheer carelessness.”

“Half the kids in our school have got stopped-up noses,” contributed Charley.

## THE HEALTH MASTER

“Why has n’t the Committee on Schools reported the fact?” demanded the Health Master, turning an accusing eye on Julia.

“Why — why, I did n’t think of it,” said she. “I did n’t think it was anything.”

“Oh, you did n’t! Well, if what Charley says is correct, I should think your school ought to be put under epidemic regimen.”

“You’d have a fine row with the Board of Education, trying to persuade them to special action for any such cause as that,” remarked Mr. Clyde.

“There’s the measure of their intelligence, then,” returned the Health Master. “Sickness is sickness, just as surely as a flame is fire; and there is no telling, once it’s well started, how much damage it may do.”

“But a cold is only in the head, or rather, in the nose,” persisted Mrs. Sharpless.

“That’s where you’re wrong. Coryza is a disease of the whole system, and it weakens the whole system. The symptoms are most apparent in the nose and mouth: and it is from the nose and mouth that the disease is spread. But if you’ve got the cold you’ve got it in every corner of your being. You won’t be convinced of its importance, I suppose, until I can produce facts and figures. I only hope they won’t be producible from this house.

## THE HOUSE THAT CAUGHT COLD

But by the end of the season I'll hope to have them. Meantime we'll isolate Bettykin."

Bettina was duly isolated. Meanwhile the active little coryza bacillus had got its grip on Mr. Clyde, who for three days attended to his business with streaming eyes, and then retired, in the company of various hot-water bags, bottles, and foot-warmers, to the sanctuary of his own bedroom, where he led a private and morose existence for one week. His general manager succeeded to his desk; likewise, to his contaminated pencils, erasers, and other implements, whereby he alternately sneezed and objurgated himself into the care of a doctor, with the general and unsatisfactory result that the balance-sheet of Clyde & Co., Manufacturers, showed an obvious loss for the month — as it happened, most unfortunately, an unusually busy month — of some three thousand dollars, directly traceable to that unconsidered trifle, a cold in the head.

"At that you got off cheap," argued the Health Master.

It was three months after the invasion of the Clyde household by Bettina's coryza germ.

"I'm glad somebody considers it cheap!" observed Mr. Clyde. "Personally I should rather have taken a trip to Europe on my share of that three thousand dollars."

## THE HEALTH MASTER

“Yet you were lucky,” asserted Dr. Strong. “Bettykin got through her earache without any permanent damage. Robin’s attack passed off without complications. Your own onset didn’t involve any organ more vital than your bank account. And the rest of us escaped.”

“Does n’t it prove what I said,” demanded Grandma Sharpless; “that a cold in the head is only a cold in the head?”

“‘Answer is No,’ as Togo would put it,” replied the Health Master. “In fact, I’ve got proof here of quite the opposite, which I desire to present to this gathering.”

“This meeting of the Household Protective Association is hereby called to order!” announced Mr. Clyde, in the official tones proper to the occasion. The children put aside their various occupations and assumed a solemn and businesslike aspect which was part of the game. “The lone official member will now report,” concluded the chairman.

“Let the Health Officer of the city report for me,” said Dr. Strong, taking a printed leaflet from his pocket. “He is one of those rare officials who are n’t afraid to tell people what they don’t know, and may not want to know. Listen to what Dr. Merritt has to say.” And he read:—

“‘The death-rate of the city for the month of February, like the rate for December and January,

## THE HOUSE THAT CAUGHT COLD

is abnormally high, being a shade over ten per cent above the normal for this time of year. While the causes of mortality range through the commoner diseases, with a special rise in pulmonary troubles, it is evident that the increase must be due to some special cause. In the opinion of the Bureau of Health this cause is the despised and infectious "cold," more properly known as coryza, which has been epidemic this winter in the city. Although the epidemic wave is now receding, its disastrous after-effects may be looked for in high mortality rates for some months. Should a similar onset occur again, the city will be asked to consider seriously a thorough school campaign, with careful isolation of all suspicious cases."

"Did you write that, young man?" asked Mrs. Sharpless suspiciously.

"Why, no; I did n't *write* it," answered the Health Master. "I'll go as far as to admit, however, that Dr. Merritt listens politely to my humble suggestions when I offer them."

"Humph! Ten per cent increase. What is that in real figures?"

"Twenty-five extra deaths a month," said Manny Clyde, a growing expert on local statistics.

"Seventy-five needless deaths for the three months, and more to come," said the Health Master, "besides all the disability, loss of time and

## THE HEALTH MASTER

earning power and strength, and all the pain and suffering — which things never get into the vital statistics, worse luck! So much to the account of the busy little coryza-bug.”

“Can’t the Health Bureau do something?” asked the practical Mr. Clyde.

“Not much, until its public is better educated,” said Dr. Strong wearily. “The present business of a health official is to try and beat the fool-killer off from his natural prey with a printed tract. It’s quite a job, when you come to consider it.”

“What he ought to have, is the club of the law!” said Mr. Clyde.

“Precisely. The people won’t give it to him. In this household we’re better off, since we can make our own laws. Since Betty’s attack we’ve tried out the isolation plan pretty effectually; and we’ve followed, as well as might be, the rule of avoiding contact with people having coryza.”

He glanced up at a flamboyant poster which Mrs. Clyde, who had a natural gift of draftsmanship, had made in a spirit of mischief, entitling it “The Red Nose as a Danger Signal.”

“As much truth as fun in that,” he remarked. “But, at the best, we can’t live among people and avoid all danger. In fact, avoidance is only the outer line of defense. The inner line is symbolized by a homely rule, ‘Keep Comfortable.’”



## THE HOUSE THAT CAUGHT COLD

“What’s comfort to do with keeping well?” asked Grandma Sharpless.

“What are your nerves for?” retorted Dr. Strong with his quizzical smile.

“Young man,” said the old lady plaintively, “did I ever ask you a question that you did n’t fire another back at me before it was fairly out of my mouth? My nerves, if I let myself have any, would n’t be for anything except to plague me.”

“Oh, those are pampered nerves. Normal nerves are to warn you. They’re to tell you whether the little things of life are right with you.”

“And if they’re not?” asked Mr. Clyde.

“Why, then you’re uncomfortable. Which is to say, there’s something wrong; and something wrong means, in time, a lessening of vitality, and when you let down your body’s vitality you’re simply saying to any germ that may happen along, ‘Come right in and make yourself at home.’

“Perhaps you remember when the house caught cold, how shocked Grandma Sharpless was at my saying that colds are n’t caught in a draft. Well, they’re not. Yet I ought to have qualified that. Now, what is a draft? Air in motion. If there is one thing about air that we thoroughly know, it’s this: that moving air is infinitely better for us than still air. Even bad, stale air, if stirred vigorously into motion, seems to purify itself and become breath-

## THE HEALTH MASTER

able and good. Now, the danger of a draft is that it may mean a sudden change of the body's temperature. Nobody thinks that wind is unhealthful, because when you're out in the wind — which is the biggest and freest kind of a draft — you're prepared for it. If not, your nerves say to you, 'Move faster; get warm.' It's the same indoors. If the draft chills you, your nerves will tell you so. Therefore, mind your nerves. Otherwise, you'll become specially receptive to the coryza germ and when you've caught *that*, you'll have caught cold."

"I wish," remarked Mr. Clyde, "that my nerves would tell me why I feel so lopy every morning. They don't say anything definite. It is n't indigestion exactly. But I feel slow and inert after breakfast, as if my stomach had n't any enthusiasm in its job."

"Breakfast is the only meal I don't have with you, so I don't know," replied the Health Master, who was a very early riser. "But I should say you were eating the wrong things, perhaps."

"How could that be?" said Mrs. Clyde. "Tom has the simplest kind of breakfast, and it's the same every day."

"Well, there you are." The Health Master's tone assumed that the solution was found.

"Where are we?" queried Mr. Clyde. "I'm up in the air!"

## THE HOUSE THAT CAUGHT COLD

“What is this remarkably regular breakfast?”

“Eggs, rolls, and coffee.”

“Oh! Eggs every morning?”

“Two of them. Medium boiled.”

“Not even the method is varied. Same eggs, same preparation every morning, seven days a week, four weeks a month, twelve months —”

“No. That’s my winter breakfast only.”

“Very well; four or five months in the year. No wonder your poor stomach gets bored.”

“What’s the matter with eggs, Dr. Strong?” inquired Manny. “They let us have ’em, in training.”

“Nothing is the matter with two eggs, or twenty. But when you come to two hundred, there’s something very obvious the matter — monotony. Your stomach is a machine, it’s true, but it’s a human machine. It demands variety.”

“Then Charles ought to be a model. He wants everything from soup to pie.”

“A thoroughly normal desire for a growing boy.”

“He eats an awful lot of meat,” observed Julia, who was a somewhat fastidious young lady. “My Sunday-school teacher calls meat-eaters human tigers.”

“Oh, that’s too easy a generalization, Junkum,” replied the Health Master. “With equal logic she could say that vegetable-eaters are human cows.”

## THE HEALTH MASTER

“But the vegetarians make very strong arguments,” said Mrs. Clyde.

“A lot of pale-eyed, weak-blooded nibblers!” stated Grandma Sharpless. “If meat were n’t good for us, we would n’t have been eating it all these generations.”

“True enough. Perhaps we eat a little too much of it, particularly in the warm months. But in winter it’s practically a necessity.”

“Some of the big athletes say they’re vegetarians,” said Manny.

“There are individual cases,” admitted the Health Master; “but in the long run it does n’t work. A vegetarian race is, generally speaking, small of stature and build, and less efficient than a meat-eating race. The rule of eating is solid food, sound food, plenty of it, and a good variety. Give your stomach a fair chance: don’t overload it, don’t understock it, and don’t let it get bored.”

For some time Miss Bettina had been conducting a quiet and strategic advance upon the Health Master, and now by a sudden onslaught she captured his knee and, perching herself thereon, put a soft and chubby hand under his chin.

“You want something, Miss Toodles,” he accused with a formidable frown. “None of your wheedling ways with me! Out with it!”

## THE HOUSE THAT CAUGHT COLD

"Candy," said the child, in no way impressed by his severity.

"Candy, indeed! When?"

"Now. Any time. Lots of it. Lots of sugar, too."

"Betty's developing *such* a sweet tooth!" mourned her mother. "I have to limit her rigidly."

"Why?"

"You would n't let the child stuff herself on sweets all the time," protested Grandma Sharpless, scandalized.

"Nor on anything else. But if she craves sweets, why not let her have them at the proper time?"

"Well, in my day children ate plain food and were thankful."

"Hm! I'm a little dubious about the thankfulness. And in your day children died more frequently and more easily than in ours."

"They were n't pampered to death on candy, anyway!"

"Possibly they were n't pampered quite enough. Take the Cherub, here," he tossed Betty in the air and whisked her to his shoulder. "She's a perfect little bundle of energy, always in motion. She needs energy-producing food to keep going, coal for that engine. Sugar is almost pure carbon; that is, coal in digestible form. Of course she wants sweets. Her little body is logical."

## THE HEALTH MASTER

“But is n’t it bad for her teeth?” asked Mrs. Clyde.

“No; nor for her last year’s overshoes or her tin dog’s left hind leg,” chuckled the Health Master. “Sometimes I marvel that the race has survived all the superstitions surrounding food and drink.”

“In my father’s household,” said Mr. Clyde, “the family principle was never to drink anything with meals. The mixture of solids and liquids was held to be bad. Another superstition, I suppose.”

“At that rate, bread and milk would be rank poison,” said Dr. Strong. “Next to food, water has got the finest incrustation of old-wives’ warnings. Now, there’s some doubt whether a man should eat whenever he wants to. Appetite, in the highly nervous American organization, is sometimes tricky. But thirst is trustworthy. The normal man is perfectly safe in drinking all the water he wants whenever he wants it.”

“I can still remember the agonies that I suffered when, as a boy, I had scarlet fever, and they would allow me almost no water,” said Mr. Clyde.

“One of medicine’s direst errors,” said Dr. Strong. “Nobody will ever know how much that false and cruel system has added to our death-rate in the past. To-day a practitioner who kept water from a fever patient — unless there were unusual complications — would be properly citable for mal-

## THE HOUSE THAT CAUGHT COLD

practice. By the way," he continued, "we're changing our views about feeding in long illnesses. Typhoid patients have always been kept down to the lowest possible diet, nothing but milk. Now, some of the big hospitals are feeding typhoid cases, right through the fever, on foods carefully selected for their heat and energy values, with the result that not only has the patient more strength to fight the disease, but he pulls through practically free from the emaciation which has always been regarded as inevitable."

"Can I have my candy?" inquired Bettina, holding to her own point.

"If it's good, sound candy. Now I'm going to utter an awful heresy. Generally speaking, and in moderation, what you want is good for you."

"Pure anarchy," laughed Mr. Clyde.

"Not at all; the law of the body, always demanding what is best for its development."

"Well, I want," declared Robin, with a sudden energy, "to take off these hot, scratchy flannels."

"Too late now," said the Health Master, "until spring. You've been wearing them all winter. But another year, if I have my way, you won't have to put them on."

"You'd let him tempt pneumonia by going through a winter with light summer underwear?"

"Unless you get out an injunction against me,"

## THE HEALTH MASTER

smiled the physician. "Bobs had a pretty tough time of it for the first week when he changed to flannels. He's thin-skinned, and the rough wool irritated him pretty badly. In fact, he had a slight fever for two days. It is n't worth that suffering. Besides, he's a full-blooded youngster, and does n't need the extra warmth. You can't dress all children alike in material any more than you can dress them all from the same pattern."

"Then I want to leave off mine, too," announced Charles.

"Nonsense! You little ruffian, you could wear sandpaper on that skin of yours. Don't talk to me, or next time I see you without your overcoat I'll order a hair shirt for you."

"I've never thought much about the children's clothes, except to change between the seasons," confessed Mrs. Clyde. "I supposed that was all there is to it."

"Not wholly. I once knew a man who died from changing his necktie."

"Did he put on a red tie with a pink shirt?" interestedly queried Manny, who had reached the age where attire was becoming a vital interest.

"He changed abruptly, from the big puff-tie which he had worn all winter, and which was a regular chest-protector, to a skimpy bow, thereby exposing a weak chest and getting pneumonia quite



## THE HOUSE THAT CAUGHT COLD

naturally. Yet he was ordinarily a cautious old gentleman, and shifted the weight of his underclothes by the calendar — a rather stupid thing to do, by the way.”

“On the first of November,” began Grandma Sharpless severely —

“Yes, I know,” cut in the Health Master. “Your whole family went into flannels whether the thermometer was twenty or seventy. And we’ve seen it both, more than once on that date.”

“What harm did it ever do them?”

“Bodily discomfort. In other words, lessened vitality. Think how much nervous wear is suffered by a child itching and squirming in a scratchy suit of heavy flannels on a warm day.”

“Children can’t be changing from one weight to another every day, can they?” asked Mrs. Clyde.

“No need of that. But in the fall and spring we can regulate that matter a little more by the thermometer, and a little less by the almanac. There is also the consideration of controlling heat. Now, Charley, what would you think of a man who, in June, say, with the mercury at seventy-five, wandered around in a heavy suit and his winter flannels.”

“I’d think he was sick,” said the nine-year-old promptly, “or else foolish. But what makes you ask *me*?”

## THE HEALTH MASTER

“Just by way of calling your attention to the thermometer, which in this room stands at seventy-nine. And here we all sit, dressed twenty-five per cent warmer than if we were out doors in a June temperature several degrees colder. You’re the Committee on Air and Light, Charley. I think this matter of heat ought to come within your province.”

“And it makes you feel so cold when you go out,” said Julia.

“Of course. We Americans live in one of the most trying climates in the world, and we add to its rigors by heating our houses like incubators. No room over seventy, ought to be the rule.”

“It’s hard to work in a cold room,” said Mr. Clyde.

“Not when you’re used to it. The Chicago schools that have started winter roof classes for sickly children, find that the average of learning capacity goes up markedly in the cold, clean air.”

“But they can’t be as comfortable,” said Mrs. Clyde.

“Much more so. As soon as the children get used to it, they love it, and they object strenuously to going back into the close rooms. The body grasps and assimilates the truth; the mind responds.”

“Well, I like to be comfortable as well as any-

## THE HOUSE THAT CAUGHT COLD

body," said Mrs. Sharpless, "but I don't consider it the chief end of life."

"Not the chief end," assented Dr. Strong; "the chief means."

"Comfort and health," mused Mrs. Clyde. "It seems a natural combination."

"The most natural in the world. Let me put it into an allegory. Health is the main line, the broad line, the easy line. It's the simple line to travel, because comfort keeps pointing it out. Essentially it is the line of the least resistance. The trouble with most of us is we're always unconsciously taking transfers to the cross-lines. The transfer may be Carelessness, or Slothfulness, or Gluttony, or one of the Dissipations in food, drink, work or play; or it may be even Egotism, which is sometimes a poison: but they all take you to Sick Street. Don't get a transfer down Sick Street. The road is rough, the scenery dismal, and at the end is the cemetery."

"That's the end of all roads," said Grandma Sharpless.

"Then in Heaven's name," said the Health Master, "let us take the longest and sunniest route and sing as we go!"

## XI

### THE BESIEGED CITY

To Bettina falls the credit of setting the match to the train. That lively-minded young lady had possessed herself of a large, red square of cardboard, upon which, in the midst of the Clyde family circle, she wrought mightily with a paint-brush.

“What comes after *p* in ‘diphtheria,’ Charley?” she presently appealed to her next older brother.

Charley considered the matter with head aslant. “Another *p*,” he answered, tactfully postponing the evil moment.

“It does n’t look right,” announced the Cherub, after a moment’s contemplation. “Dr. Strong, how do *you* spell ‘diphtheria’?”

“I? Why, Toots, I spell it with a capital, but leave off the final *x*,” replied the Health Master cheerfully. “What kind of a game are you playing? Quarantining your dolls?”

“It is n’t a game.” Betty could be, on occasion, quite a self-contained young person.

“What is it, then, if I’m not prying too far into personal matters?”

“It’s for Eula Simms to put on her house.”

## THE BESIEGED CITY

“The Simmses *will* be pleased,” remarked Julia.

“They ought to be,” said Betty complacently. “I don’t suppose they can afford a regular one like the one we put up when Charley had scarlet fever, two years ago. And Eula’s big sister’s got diphtheria,” she added quite casually.

“What’s that?” The Health Master straightened up sharply in his chair. “How do you know that, Twinkles?”

“Eula told me across the fence this morning. She’s excused from school. Three other houses on the street have got it, too. I’m going to make placards for them.”

“And do the work in play that the Health Department ought to be doing in the deadliest earnest! What on earth is Dr. Merritt thinking of?” And he went to the telephone to call up the Health Officer and find out.

“We’re due for a bad diphtheria year, too,” observed Grandma Sharpless, whose commentaries on practical matters, being always the boiled-down essence of first-hand observation, carried weight in the household. “I’ve noticed that it swings around about once in every five or six years. And it was six years ago we had that bad epidemic.”

“Then there is the influenza epidemic of last

## THE HEALTH MASTER

spring to consider," said Mrs. Clyde. "Dr. Strong told us then that we'd have to pay for that for months. So, I suppose, the city is still in a weakened condition and easy soil for diphtheria or any other epidemic."

"There's measles already in our school," said Julia. "That'll help, too."

"Why have n't you reported it, Junkum?" asked her father. "You're Chairman of the Committee on School Conditions of the Clyde Household Protective Association."

"We only found out to-day," said Bobs, "when they told us maybe school would close."

"Three years I've been President of the Public Health League," remarked Mr. Clyde with a wry face, "and nothing has happened. Now that I'm just about retiring I hope there is n't going to be serious trouble. What does the Health Department say, Strong?" he inquired, turning as the Health Master entered.

"Something very wrong there. Merritt won't talk over the 'phone. Wants me to come down."

"This evening?"

"Yes. He's ill, himself, and badly worried. What do *you* think?"

"It looks like some skullduggery," declared Mr. Clyde, borrowing one of his mother-in-law's expressive words. "Is it possible that reports of diph-

## THE BESIEGED CITY

theria are being suppressed, and that is why the infected houses are not placarded?"

"If it is, we're in for trouble. As I told you, when I undertook the Chinese job of keeping this household in health," continued the Health Master, addressing the family, "I can't reliably protect a family in a community which does n't protect itself. There are too many loopholes through which infection may penetrate. So the Protective Association, in self-defense, may have to spur up the city to its own defense. First, though, I'm going over the throats of this family and take cultures."

"You don't think," began the mother anxiously, "that the children —"

"No; I don't think they've got it. But the bacteriological analysis will show."

"I hate to have it done," said Mrs. Clyde, shuddering. "It seems so — so inviting of trouble."

"Superstition," said Dr. Strong, smiling. "Are n't you just as anxious to find out that they *have n't* got the infection as that they have? Come on, Bettykin; you're first." And, having prepared his material, he swabbed the throats of the whole company, after which he took the cultures with him to Dr. Merritt.

It was late when he returned, but he went direct to Mr. Clyde's room.

## THE HEALTH MASTER

“It’s worse than I thought, Clyde,” said he. “We’re in the first stage of a bad epidemic. The reports have been suppressed by Mullins, the Deputy Health Officer.”

“What did he do that for?”

“To cover his own inefficiency. He is City Bacteriologist, also, and the law requires him, in time of epidemic, to make bacteriological analyses. He does n’t know how. So he simply pigeonholed the case reports as they came in.”

“How did such a rascal ever get the job?” asked Clyde.

“Political pull. The most destructive of all the causes of death which never get into the mortality records,” said Dr. Strong bitterly.

“How many cases?”

“Three or four hundred, at least. It’s got a good start. And more than that of measles. While he was in the business of suppressing, Mullins threw a lot of measles reports aside, too. I don’t like the prospect.”

“The first thing to do,” decided Mr. Clyde, with customary energy, “is to get Dr. Mullins out. I’ll call an emergency meeting of the Public Health League to-morrow. By the way, Julia has some matters to report from school.”

“Well, suppose we call an emergency meeting of our own of the Household Protective Asso-



## THE BESIEGED CITY

ciation for to-morrow evening," suggested Dr. Strong. "Since we're facing an epidemic, we may as well fortify the youngsters as soundly as possible."

Directly after dinner on the following evening the Association was called to order by Mr. Clyde, presiding. It was a full meeting except for Maynard, who had not returned for dinner. First Dr. Strong reported that the cultures from the throats of the family had turned out "negative." "So we don't have to worry about that," he remarked. Whereupon Mrs. Clyde and her mother drew long breaths of relief.

"And now for the Committee on School Conditions," said Mr. Clyde.

"All I've heard of in our school is measles," announced Julia. "There's a lot of the boys and girls away."

"No diphtheria?" asked Mr. Clyde.

"I asked Miss Brown that at recess, and she looked queer and said, 'None that we know of.' But I heard of some cases in the Academy; so I told Manny."

"Why Manny?" asked Mrs. Clyde.

"He's Chairman of the Committee on Milk, and the Bliss children from our dairy go to the Academy."

"That explains why Maynard is n't here, then,"

## THE HEALTH MASTER

said the grandmother. "I suppose he's gone out to the farm."

"Yes. He took the interurban trolley out, to make sure that they'd be careful about keeping the children away from the dairy."

"Good team-work, Junkum," approved the presiding officer.

"And I asked Mary and Jim Bliss to come around to-morrow to see Dr. Strong and have him look at their throats."

"You ought to be drawing a salary from the city, young lady," said the Health Master warmly. "You may have stopped a milk-route infection; one of the hardest kind to trace down."

"They're talking of closing school after to-morrow," concluded the girl.

"The very worst thing they could do," declared Dr. Strong.

"The very best, I should think," controverted Grandma Sharpless, who never hesitated to take issue with any authority, pending elucidation of the question under discussion. "If you group a lot of children close together it stands to reason they'll catch the disease from each other."

"Not unless you group them too close. Arm's length is the striking distance of a contagious disease. *There's* a truth for all of us to remember all the time."

## THE BESIEGED CITY

"If it *is* a truth," challenged Mrs. Sharpless.

"One of the surest and one of the most important," averred the Health Master. "The only substance that carries the contagion of diphtheria or measles is the mucus from the nose or throat of an infected person. As far as that can be coughed or sneezed is the danger area. Of course, any article contaminated with it is dangerous also. But a hygienically conducted schoolroom is as safe a place as could be found. I'd like to run a school in time of epidemic. I'd make it a distributing agency for health instead of disease."

"How would you manage that?"

"By controlling and training the pupils hygienically. Don't you see that school attendance offers the one best chance of keeping track of such an epidemic, among the very ones who are most liable to it, the children? Diphtheria is contagious in the early stages, as soon as the throat begins to get sore, and before the patient is really ill. Just now there is an indeterminate number of children in every one of our schools who have incipient diphtheria. What is the one important thing to do about them?"

"Find out who they are," said Julia quickly.

"Exactly. If you close school to-morrow and scatter the scholars far and wide in their homes, how are we going to find out this essential fact? In

## THE HEALTH MASTER

their own homes, with no one to watch their physical condition, they will go on developing the illness unsuspected for days, maybe, and spread it about them in the process of development. Whereas, if we keep them in school under a system of constant inspection, we shall discover these cases and surround them with safeguards. Why, if a fireman should throw dynamite into a burning house and scatter the flaming material over several blocks, he'd be locked up as insane. Yet here we propose to scatter the fire of contagion throughout the city. It's criminal idiocy!"

"If we could only be sure of controlling it in the schools," said Grandma Sharpless, still doubtful.

"At least we can do much toward it. As a matter of fact the best authorities are very doubtful whether diphtheria is a 'school disease,' anyway. There is more evidence, though not conclusive, that measles is."

"Surely we don't have to consider measles now, in the face of the greater danger."

"Most emphatically we do. For one thing, it will increase the diphtheria rate. A child weakened by measles is so much the more liable to catch any other disease which may be rife. Besides, measles spreads so rapidly that it often kills a greater total than more dangerous illnesses. We must prepare for a double warfare."

## THE BESIEGED CITY

“At the Public Health League meeting,” said Mr. Clyde, “the objections to closing the schools came from those who feared that an official acknowledgment that the city had an epidemic would hurt business.”

“A viciously wrong reason for being right,” said the Health Master. “By the way, I suppose that Dr. Mullins will be Acting Health Officer, now that Merritt is unfortunately out of it. Merritt went to the hospital in collapse after the session of the Board of Education at which he appeared, to argue for keeping the schools open.”

“No,” said Clyde. “We’ve blocked Mullins off. But it’s the next step that is troubling me. What would you do, Strong, if you were in control?”

“Put a medical inspector in every school,” answered Dr. Strong instantly. “Send home every child with the snuffles or an inflamed throat. And send with him full warning and instructions to the parents. Have daily inspection and instruction of all pupils.”

“Can you make school children understand?”

“Why not? It is merely a matter of telling them repeatedly: ‘Keep your fingers and other objects away from your mouth and nose. Wash your hands frequently. Brush your teeth and rinse your mouth well. And keep your distance. Remember, that the striking distance of disease is arm’s length.’”

## THE HEALTH MASTER

Then I would break class every hour, throw open every window, and march the children around for five minutes. This for the sake of improved general condition. Penalize the pupils for any violation of hygienic regulations. Hygienic martial law for war-time."

"Good!" applauded Mr. Clyde. "So much for the schools. What about the general public?"

"Educate them to the necessity of watching for danger signals; the running nose, the sore throat, the tiny pimples on the inside of the mouth or cheek which are the first sign of measles. Above all, furnish free anti-toxin. Make it free to all. This is no time to be higgling over pennies."

"I don't like the principle of coddling our citizens by giving to those who can afford to pay."

"Better coddled citizens than dead children. Unless you give out free anti-toxin, physicians to families where every dollar counts will say, 'Oh, it may not be diphtheria. We'll wait and see, and maybe save the extra dollars.' Diphtheria does n't wait. It strikes. Then there is the vitally important use of anti-toxin as a preventive. To render a whole family immune, where there is exposure from a known case of diphtheria, is expensive at the present rates, but is the most valuable expedient known. It is so much easier to prevent than to cure."

## THE BESIEGED CITY

“All right; I give in. What else?”

“Education, education, education; always education of the public, till the last flame is stamped out. Get the press, first; that is the most direct and far-reaching agency. Then organize public meetings, lectures, addresses in churches and Sunday schools, talks wherever you can get people together to listen. That is what I’d do.”

“Go ahead and do it, then.”

“Easily said,” smiled the Health Master. “Who am I, to practice what I preach?”

“Provisional Health Officer of Worthington,” came the quick answer. “I have the Mayor’s assurance that he will appoint you to-morrow if you will take the job.”

“I’ll do it,” said the Health Master, blinking a little with the suddenness of the announcement, but speaking unhesitatingly, “on two conditions: open schools and free anti-toxin.”

“I’ll get that arranged with the Mayor. Meantime, you have unlimited leave of absence as Chinese physician to the Clyde household.”

“But the Household Protective Association will have to back me,” said Dr. Strong, as the meeting broke up. “I can’t get along without you.”

Swiftly and terribly moves an epidemic, once it has gained headway. And silence and concealment

## THE HEALTH MASTER

had fostered this onset from the first. Despite the best efforts of the new Health Officer, within a week the streets of the city were abloom with the malignant flower of the scarlet for diphtheria and the yellow for measles.

“First we must find out where we stand,” Dr. Strong told his subordinates; and, enlisting the services of the great body of physicians, — there is no other class of men so trained and inspired to altruistic public service as the medical profession, — he instituted a house-to-house search for hidden or undiscovered cases. From the best among his volunteers he chose a body of auxiliary school inspectors, one for every school, whom he held to their daily régime with military rigor.

“But my patients are dying while I am looking after a roomful of healthy children,” objected one of them.

“You can save twenty lives by early detection of the disease, in the time it takes to save one by treatment,” retorted the disciplinarian. “In war the individual must sometimes be sacrificed. And this is war.”

The one bright spot in the early days of the battle was Public School Number Three which the twins and Bettina attended. The medical inspector who had this assignment was young, intelligent, and an enthusiast. Backed by Dr. Strong, and



## THE BESIEGED CITY

effectively aided by the Clyde children, he enforced a system which brought prompt results. In every instance where a pupil was sent home under suspicion, — and the first day's inspection brought to light three cases of incipient diphtheria, and fifteen which developed into measles, besides a score of suspicious symptoms, — Julia, or Robin Clyde, or one of the teachers went along to deliver printed instructions as to the defense of the household, and to explain to the family the vital necessity of heeding the regulations until such time as the physician could come and determine the nature of the ailment. Within a week, amidst growing panic and peril, Number Three was standing like an isle of safety. After that time, not a single new case of either disease developed from exposure within its limits, and in only two families represented in the school was there any spread of contagion.

“It's the following-up into the house that does it,” said Dr. Strong, at an early morning meeting of the Household Protective Association (he still insisted on occasional short sessions, in spite of the overwhelming demands on his time and energies, on the ground that these were “the only chances I get to feel the support of full understanding and sympathy”), “that and the checking-up of the three carriers we found.”

## THE HEALTH MASTER

“What’s a carrier?” asked Bettina, who had an unquenchable thirst for finding out things.

“A carrier, Toodlekins, is a perfectly well person who has the germs of disease in his throat. Why he does n’t fall ill himself, we don’t know. He can give the disease to another person just as well as if he were in the worst stages of it himself. Every epidemic develops a number of carriers. One of the greatest arguments for inspection is that it brings to light these people, who constitute the most difficult and dangerous phase of infection, because they go on spreading the disease without being suspected. Now, I’ve got ours from Number Three quarantined. If I could catch every carrier in town, I’d guarantee to be in control of the situation in three weeks.”

“Our reports show over twenty of them discovered and isolated,” said Mrs. Clyde, who had turned her abounding energies to the organization of a corps of visiting nurses.

“Perhaps I’d better say something about carriers in my next talk,” said Grandma Sharpless, whose natural gift as a ready and convincing speaker, unsuspected by herself as well as her family until the night when she had met and routed the itinerating quack on his own platform, was now being turned to account in the campaign for short talks before Sunday schools and club gatherings.

## THE BESIEGED CITY

“Develop it as part of the arm’s-length idea,” suggested the Health Master. “Any person may be a carrier and therefore a peril on too close contact. Tell ’em that in words of one syllable.”

“Never use any other kind when I mean it,” answered Mrs. Sharpless. “What about that party at Mrs. Ellery’s, Manny?”

“I’ve got that fixed,” replied Maynard Clyde, who had been acting as general factotum for the household in its various lines of endeavor. “Mrs. Ellery gave a party to our crowd Friday night,” he explained to Dr. Strong, “and Monday one of the Ellery girls came down with diphtheria.”

“What have you done about it?” asked the Health Master.

“Notified all the people who were there. That was easy. The trouble is that a lot of the fellows have gone back to college since: to Hamilton, Michigan, Wisconsin, Harvard, Columbia, — I suppose there were a dozen colleges represented.”

“And you think that’s too wide a field for the follow-up system?” asked his father.

“Why, no,” said the boy thoughtfully. “I figured that starting a new epidemic would be worse than adding to an old one. So I went to Mrs. Ellery and got a list of her guests, and I wrote to every college the fellows have gone back to, and wrote to

## THE HEALTH MASTER

the fellows themselves. They probably won't thank me for it."

"They ought to give you a life-saving medal each," declared Dr. Strong. "As for the situation here" — his face darkened — "we're not making any general headway. The public is n't aroused, and it won't be until we can get the newspapers to take up the fight. The thing that discourages me is that they won't help. I don't understand it."

"Don't you? I do," said Clyde grimly. "Their advertisers won't let 'em print anything about it. As I told you in the matter of closing the schools, business is frightened. The department stores, theaters, and other big advertisers are afraid that the truth about the epidemic would scare away trade. So they are compelling the papers to keep quiet."

"Idiots!" cried Dr. Strong. "Suppressing news is like suppressing gas. The longer you do it, the more violent the inevitable explosion. But when I called on the editors, they did n't say anything to me about the advertising pressure. It was, 'We should be glad to help in any way, Dr. Strong. But an alarmist policy is not for the best interests of Worthington; and the good of our community must always be the first consideration.' — Bah! The variations I've heard on that sickening theme

## THE BESIEGED CITY

today! The 'Press,' the 'Clarion,' the 'Evening News,' the 'Telegram,' the 'Observer' — all of 'em."

"You did n't mention the 'Star,'" said Grandma Sharpless.

"That rag? It's against everything decent and for everything rotten in this town," said Clyde.

"When I need a danger signal," observed the old lady with her most positive air, "I'll wave any kind of rag. The 'Star' has circulation."

"Yes," admitted the Health Master, "and among the very class we want to reach. But what's the use?"

"I don't know," said Mrs. Sharpless. "But I'm going to find out."

One hour later she walked into the editorial sanctum of Mr. "Bart" Snyder, editor, proprietor, and controlling mind of as "yellow" a sheet as ever subsisted on a combination of enterprise, real journalistic ability, and blackmail. Mr. Snyder sat in a perfect slump of apparent languor, his body sagging back into his tilted chair, one foot across his desk, the other trailing like a broken wing along the floor, his shrewd, lined face uplifted at an acute angle with the cigar he was chewing, and his green hat achieving the most rakish effect possible to a third slant. His brilliant gray eyes were narrowed into a hard twinkle as he surveyed his visitor.

## THE HEALTH MASTER

“Siddown,” he grunted, and shoved a chair toward her with the grounded foot.

Grandma Sharpless did not “siddown.” Instead she marched over to a spot directly in front of him, halted, and looked straight into the hard, humorous face.

“Bartholomew Snyder,” said she crisply, “I knew you when you were a boy. I knew your mother, too. She was a decent woman. Take off that hat.”

The Snyder jaw fell so unpremeditatedly that the Snyder cigar dropped upon the littered floor. One third of a second later, the Snyder foot descended upon it (and it was a twenty-cent cigar, too) as the Snyder chair reverted to the perpendicular, and the Snyder hat came off. The Snyder countenance quivered into articulation and therefrom came a stunned,

“Well, I’ll be —”

“No, you don’t! Not in *my* presence,” cut in his visitor. “Now, you listen.”

“I’m listening,” he assured her in a strangled murmur.

She seated herself and threw a quality of rigidity into her backbone calculated to impress if not actually to appeal. “I want your help,” she said.

“Fine, fat way you’ve got of opening up a request for a favor,” he retorted, recovering himself

## THE BESIEGED CITY

somewhat, and in a particularly discouraging voice. But the shrewd old judge of human nature before him marked the little pursing at the corners of the mouth. "I'll bet I know what it is."

"I'll bet all the money I've got in the bank and my best gold tooth thrown in you don't," was the prompt retort.

"There's a sporting proposition, all right," cried the editor in great admiration. "I thought you was going to ask me to let up on the city administration now you've got one of the fat jobs in the family, with your Dr. Strong."

"It's a good thing you don't have to make guesses for a living," returned his caller scornfully. "Pitch into the administration as hard as you like. I don't care. All I want is for you to print the news about this diphtheria epidemic."

"Is that all?" There was a profound sardonicism in the final word.

"Come to think of it, it is n't. I want you to print some editorials, too, telling people how to take care of themselves while the disease is spreading."

"Anything more?"

"Well, you might do the same thing about the measles epidemic."

"Harr-rr-rr!" It was a singular growl, not wholly compounded of wrath and disgust. "Doc Strong send you here?"

## THE HEALTH MASTER

“No; he did n’t!”

“Don’t bite me. I believe you.”

“Will you publish some articles?”

“Look-a-here, Mrs. Sharpless; the ‘Star’ is a business proposition. Its business is to make money for me. That’s all it’s here for. People say some pretty tough things about me and the paper. Well, we’re pretty tough. We can stand ’em. Let ’em talk, so long as I get the circulation and the advertising and the cash. Now, you want me to print something for you. Come down to brass tacks; what is there in it for me?”

“A chance to be of some real use to your city for once in your life,” answered Grandma Sharpless mildly. “Is n’t that enough?”

Bart Snyder threw back his head and laughed immoderately. “Say, I like you,” he gurgled. “You’ve got nerve. Me a good Samaritan! It’s so rich, I’m half a mind to go you, if it was n’t for losing the advertising. Wha’ d’ ye want me to say, anyway, just for curiosity and cussedness?”

“Just give the people plain talk,” explained the visitor. “Talk to ’em in your editorials as if you had ’em by the buttonhole. Say to them: ‘Do you want to get diphtheria? Well, you don’t need to. It’s just as easy to avoid it as to have it. Are you anxious to have measles in your house? It’s for you to decide. All you need is to take reasonable care



## THE BESIEGED CITY

against it. Infectious disease only kills foo — careless people.”

“Let it go at ‘fools,’” interjected Mr. Snyder, smiting his thigh. “Go on.”

“Then I’d give them simple, straight advice; tell them how to recognize the early symptoms; how and where to get anti-toxin. And I’d scare ’em, too. I’d tell ’em there are five thousand cases of the two diseases in town, and there will be ten thousand in a week unless something is done.”

Up rose the editor-proprietor, kicked over his own chair, whirled Mrs. Sharpless’s chair with its human burden to the desk, thrust a pencil into her hand, and slapped down a pad before her.

“Write it,” he adjured her.

“Who? Me?” cried Mrs. Sharpless, her astonishment momentarily overwhelming her grammar. “Bless you, man! I’m no writer.”

“Talk it, then, and make your pencil take down the talk. I’ll be back in a minute.”

That minute stretched to a good half-hour, during which period Grandma Sharpless talked to her pencil. When Mr. Snyder returned, he had with him a mournful-looking man who, he explained occultly, “holds down our city desk.”

“This is our new Health Editor,” chuckled Snyder, indicating Mrs. Sharpless. “How many cases did you say there were in town, ma’am?”

## THE HEALTH MASTER

“Five thousand or more.”

The city editor whistled whisperingly. “Where do you get that?” he asked.

“From Dr. Strong.”

“That’s news,” said the desk man. “I did n’t suppose it was half so bad. If only we dared print it!”

“No other paper in town dares,” suggested the visitor insinuatingly.

“Makes it all the more news,” remarked Snyder. “What if we played it up for a big feature, eh?”

“Advertisers,” said the city editor, significantly.

“Let ’em drop out. They’ll come back quick enough, when we’ve shown up one or two and told why they quit us. And think of the splash we can make! Only paper in the city that dares tell the truth. We’ll rub that into our highly respectable rivals. I’ll make you a proposition,” he added, turning to his caller.

“Make it.”

“You know I’ve hammered at Tom Clyde pretty hard. I don’t cotton to that saintly, holier-than-thou reform bunch at all. Well, let Clyde come into the ‘Star’ with a signed statement as President of the Public Health League, and we’ll make it the basis of a campaign that will rip this town wide open for a couple of weeks. I’d like to see him in my paper, after all the roasting we’ve handed

## THE BESIEGED CITY

him." And the malicious face wrinkled into another grin.

"You've bought a bargain," stated Mrs. Sharpless. "The statement will be ready to-night. And another from Dr. Strong for good measure."

"Fine business!" ejaculated the "Star's" owner. "Not open to a reasonable offer in the newspaper game, are you?" he added, laughing. "No? Well, I'm sorry."

"Would there be any use in my seeing the editors of the other papers?" asked Mrs. Sharpless.

"Watch them fall in line," was the grim response. "Before we've been out a day, they'll be tumbling over each other to make the dear, deluded public believe that they're the real pioneers in saving the city from the deadly germ."

"Well, here are my notes, if you can make anything out of them."

"Eh? Notes?" said the newspaper man, who had been glancing at the sheets over Mrs. Sharpless's shoulder. "Oh — ah. Yes, of course. All right. Glad to have metcher," he added, politely ushering her to the door. "I'll send a reporter up for the statements at eight o'clock."

"Thank you very much, Bartholomew Snyder," said Grandma Sharpless, shaking hands.

"Not a bit of it! Thanks the other way. You've

## THE HEALTH MASTER

given me a good tip in my own game. Watch me — us — wake 'em up to-morrow.”

Only the combined insistence of Grandma Sharpless and diplomacy of the Health Master overrode Mr. Clyde's angry objections to “going into that filthy sheet” when the matter was broached to him that evening. For the good of the cause he finally acceded. And next morning the “Star” was a sight! It blazed in red captions. It squirmed and wriggled with illustrations of alleged germs. It shrieked in stentorian headlines. If the city had been beset by all the dogs of war, it could n't have blared more martial defiance against the enemy. It held its competitors up to infinite scorn and derision as mean-spirited shirks and cowards, and slathered itself with fulsome praises as the only original prop of truth and righteousness. And, as the centerpoint and core of all this, flaunted the statement and signature of the Honorable Thomas Clyde, President of the Worthington Public Health League — with photograph. The face of Mr. Clyde, as he confronted this outrage upon his sensibilities at the breakfast table, was gloom itself until he turned to the editorial page. Then he emitted a whoop of glee. For there, double-leaded and double-headed was a Health Column, by “Our Special Writer, Grandma Sharpless, the Wisest Woman in Worthington. She will contrib-

## THE BESIEGED CITY

ute opinions and advice on the epidemic to the 'Star' exclusively." (Mr. Snyder had taken a chance with this latter statement.)

"Let me see," gasped the old lady, when her son-in-law made known the cause of his mirth. Then, "They've published that stuff of mine just as I wrote it. I did n't dream it was for print."

"That's what makes it so bully," said the Health Master. "You've got the editorial trick of confidential, convincing, man-to-man talk down fine. What's more, you'll have to keep it up, now. Your friend, Snyder, has fairly caught you. Well, we need an official organ in the household."

Vowing that she could n't and would n't do it, nevertheless the new "editor" began to think of so many things that she wanted to say that, each day, when a messenger arrived from the "Star" with a polite request for "copy," there was a telling column ready of the Health Master's wisdom, simplified and pointed by Grandma Sharpless's own pungent, crisp, vigorous, and homely style. Thanks largely to this, the "Star" became the mouthpiece of an anti-epidemic campaign which speedily enlisted the whole city.

But the "yellow" was not to have the field to itself. Once the cat was out of the bag, the other papers not only recognized it as a cat with great uproar, but, so to speak, proceeded to tie a can to

## THE HEALTH MASTER

its tail and pelt it through the streets of the city. As a matter of fact, no newspaper wishes to be hampered in the publishing of legitimate news; and it was only by the sternest threats of withdrawal of patronage that the large advertisers had hitherto succeeded in coercing the press of Washington. Further coercion was useless, now that the facts had found their way into type. With great unanimity and an enthusiasm none the less genuine for having been repressed, the papers rushed into the breach. The "Clarion" organized an Anti-Infection League of School Children, with officers and banners. The "Press" "attended to" the recalcitrant Dr. Mullins so fiercely that, notwithstanding his pull, he resigned his position in the Health Department because of "breakdown due to overwork in the course of his duties," and ceased to trouble, in official circles. Enterprising reporters of the "Observer" caused the arrest of thirty-five trolley-car conductors for moistening transfers with a licked thumb, and then got the street-car company to issue a new form of transfer inscribed across the back, "KEEP ME AWAY FROM YOUR MOUTH." It fell to the "Evening News" to drive the common drinking-cup out of existence, after which it instituted reforms in soda fountains, restaurants, and barber shops, while the "Telegram" garnered great glory by interspersing the inning-

## THE BESIEGED CITY

by-inning returns of the baseball championship with bits of counsel as to how to avoid contagion in the theater, in the street, in travel, in banks, at home, and in various other walks of life. But the "Star" held foremost place, and clinched it with a Sunday "cut-out" to be worn as a badge, inscribed "Hands Off, Please, Until It's Over." All of which, while it sometimes verged upon the absurd, served the fundamentally valuable purpose of keeping the public in mind of the peril of contact with infected persons or articles.

Slowly but decisively the public absorbed the lesson. "Arm's length" became a catch-phrase; a motto; a slogan. People came slowly to comprehend the methods by which disease is spread and the principles of self-protection.

And as knowledge widened, the epidemic ebbed, though gradually. Serious epidemics are not conquered or even perceptibly checked in a day. They are like floods; dam them in one place and they break through your defenses in another. Inexplicable outbreaks occur just when the tide seems to have turned. And when victory does come, it may not be ascribable to any specific achievement of the hygienic forces. The most that can be said is that the persevering combination of effort has at last made itself felt.

The red placards began to disappear; many of

## THE HEALTH MASTER

them, alas! only after the sable symbol of death had appeared beneath them. Dr. Strong and his worn-out aides found time to draw breath and reckon up their accounts in human life. The early mortality had been terrific. Of the cases which had developed in the period of suppression, before anti-toxin was readily obtainable, more than a third had died.

“Nobody will ever be indicted for those murders,” said Dr. Strong to Mr. Clyde grimly. “But we have the satisfaction of knowing what can really be done by prompt work. Look at the figures after the free anti-toxin was established.”

There was a drop in the death rate, first to twenty per cent, then to ten, and, in the ebb stage of the scourge, to well below five.

“How many infections we’ve prevented by giving anti-toxin to immunize exposed persons, there’s no telling,” continued Dr. Strong. “That principle of starting a back-fire in diphtheria, — it’s exactly like starting a back-fire in a prairie conflagration, — by getting anti-toxin into the system in time to head off the poison of the disease itself, is one of the two or three great achievements of medical science. There is n’t an infected household in the city to-day, I believe, where this has n’t been done. The end is in sight.”

“Then you can go away and get a few days’ rest,”



## THE BESIEGED CITY

said Grandma Sharpless, who constituted herself the Health Master's own health guardian and undiplomaed medical adviser, and to whom he habitually rendered meek obedience; for she had been watching with anxiety the haggard lines in his face.

"Not yet," he returned. "Measles we still have with us."

"Decreasing, though," said Mrs. Clyde. "Our nurses report a heavy drop in new cases and a big crop of convalescents."

"It is those convalescents that we must watch. I don't want a generation of deaf citizens growing up from this onset."

"But can you prevent it if the disease attacks the ears?" asked Clyde.

"Almost certainly. We've got to inspect every child who has or had measles in this epidemic, and, where the ear-drum is shiny and concave, we will puncture it, by a very simple operation, which saves serious trouble in ninety per cent of the cases, at least. But it means constant watchfulness, for often the infection progresses without pain."

"At the same time your inspectors will watch for other after-effects, then," suggested Mrs. Sharpless.

"Exactly. It's my own opinion that nearly all the serious diseases of the eye, ear, liver, kidney,

## THE HEALTH MASTER

heart, and so on in early middle age are the late remote effects of what we carelessly call the lesser diseases of childhood. It is only a theory as yet; though some day I think it will be proved. At any rate, we know that a serious and pretty definite percentage of all deafness follows measles; and we are going to carry this thing through far enough to prevent that sequel and to turn over a reasonably cleaned-up situation to Dr. Merritt."

"He's out of danger, by the way," said Mrs. Clyde, "and will be back at his desk in a fortnight."

"Well; he'll have an easier job henceforth," prophesied Mr. Clyde. "He's got an enlightened city to watch over. And he can thank you for that, Strong."

"He can thank the Clyde family," said Dr. Strong with feeling. "I could have done little without you back of me."

"It's been interesting to extend the principles of our Household Protective Association to the larger world," smiled Clyde. "Beyond our own city, too, in one case. Manny has had a letter from the Professor of Hygiene at Hamilton College, where he enters next year, thanking him on behalf of the faculty for his warning about young Hyland who was exposed to diphtheria at the Ellery party. He went back to Hamilton a few days after and was

## THE BESIEGED CITY

starting in to play basketball, which would have been decidedly dangerous for his team mates; but the authorities, after getting Manny's letter, kept him out of the gymnasium, and kept a watch on him. He developed the disease a week later; but there has been no infection from him."

"There's direct result," approved Dr. Strong. "That's what I call spreading the gospel."

"Grandma's our real revivalist, at that," said Julia. "The children at Number Three pay more attention to her column than they do to what the teachers tell them. The principal told us that it was the greatest educational force for health that Worthington had ever known."

"Only reflected wisdom from you, young man," said Grandma Sharpless to the Health Master. "Thank goodness, I'm through with it. I'm so sick of it that I can't look at writing materials without wanting to cut the ink bottle's throat with my penholder. Bart Snyder has let me off. What's more, he sent me a check for \$250. Pretty handsome of him. But I'm going to send it back."

"Why waste good money, grandma?" drawled Mr. Clyde.

"You would n't have me keep it, would you, for doing that work?"

"Who said anything about keeping it? But don't feed it back to Bart Snyder. Why not con-

## THE HEALTH MASTER

tribute it to the Public Health League? It's always got a handsome deficit."

"In graceful recognition of my having a son-in-law as president of it, I suppose."

"I'm not president any more. My term was up last night. They did n't honor me with a reëlection," said Mr. Clyde, with a rather too obvious glumness, which, for once, escaped the sharp old lady.

"The slinkums!" she cried. "After all the time and work you've given to it!"

"Well," said the ex-incumbent philosophically, "there's one comfort. They've put a better man in my place."

"No such a thing," declared his mother-in-law, with vehement partisanship. "They could n't find one. Who was it?"

"Give you one guess."

"Was it you, young man?" queried she, fixing the Health Master with a baleful eye.

"Oh, no; a better man than I," he hastened to assure her.

"Well, in the name of sakes, who, then?"

"You," said Mr. Clyde, grabbing the old lady by both shoulders and giving her a vigorous kiss. "Unanimously elected amidst an uproar of enthusiasm, as the 'Star' puts it. Here it is, on the first column of the front page."

## THE BESIEGED CITY

For the first time in the history of the Clyde household, the senior member thereof gave way to an unbridled license of speech, in the presence of the family.

“Well, I vum!” said Grandma Sharpless.

## XII

### PLAIN TALK

“WHAT do you find so interesting in that paper, Strong?” asked Mr. Thomas Clyde, from his place in the corner of the big living-room.

Dinner was just finished in the Clyde household, and the elders were sitting about, enjoying the easy and intermittent talk which had become a feature of the day since the Health Master had joined the family. From outside, the play of lively voices, above the harmonized undertones of a strummed guitar, told how the children were employing the after-dinner hour. Dr. Strong let the evening paper drop on his knees.

“Something that has set me thinking,” he said.

“Don’t you ever give that restless mind of yours a vacation, young man?” inquired Grandma Sharpless, looking up from her game of solitaire.

“All that is good for it. Perhaps you’d like to share this problem, and thus relieve me of part of the responsibility.”

“Do go on, if you’ve found anything exciting,” besought Mrs. Clyde, glancing up with her swift,

## PLAIN TALK

interrogating smile. "The paper seemed unusually dull to me."

"Because you did n't read quite deep enough into it, possibly." He raised the journal, folded it neatly to a half-page, and holding it before his eyes, began smoothly: —

"Far, far away, as far as your conscience will let you believe, in the Land of Parables —"

"Wait a minute," interrupted Mr. Clyde. "That 'Land of Parables' sounds as if we were going to have some Improving Information." He regarded his friend and adviser with a twinkling eye. "Ought the children to miss this?"

"That is for you to decide later," said the Health Master gravely. And he resumed: —

"Far, far away, as far as conscience will let you believe, in the Land of Parables, there once stood a prosperous and self-contented city. Men lived therein by rule and rote. Only what their fathers before them had believed and received did they believe and receive. 'As it hath been, so it is now and ever must and shall be,' was the principle whereby their lives were governed. Therefore they endured, without hope as without complaint, the depredations of a hideous Monster who preyed upon them unceasingly.

"So loathsome was this Monster that the very thought of him was held to taint the soul. His

## THE HEALTH MASTER

name was sealed away from the common speech. Only the boldest men spoke of him, and then in paraphrases and by circumlocutions. Fouled, indeed, was the fame of the woman who dared so much as confess to a knowledge of his existence.

“From time to time the wise and strong men of the city banded together and sallied forth to drive back other creatures of prey as they pressed too hard upon the people. Not so with the Monster. Because of the ban of silence no plan could be mooted, no campaign formulated to check his inroads. So he grew great and ever greater, and his blood hunger fierce and ever more fierce, and his scarlet trail wound in and out among the homes of the people, manifest even to those eyes which most sedulously sought to blind themselves against it.

“Seldom did the Monster slay outright. But where his claws clutched or his fangs pierced, a slow venom crept through the veins, and life was corroded at its very wellsprings. Nor was this the worst. Once the blight fell upon one member of a household, it might corrupt, by hidden and subtle ways, the others and innocent, who knew not of the curse overhanging them.

“Upon the foolish, the reckless, and the erring the Monster most readily fastened himself. But man nor woman nor child was exempt. Necessity drove young girls, struggling and shuddering, into



## PLAIN TALK

the Monster's very jaws. The purity of a child or of a Galahad could not always save from the serpent-stroke which sped from out the darkness."

"One moment, Strong," broke in Mr. Clyde. "You've read this before?"

"I know what is in it, if that is what you mean. Why?"

"Nothing," hesitated the other, glancing toward his wife and her mother. "Only, I suspect it is n't going to be pleasant."

"It is n't pleasant. It's true."

Grandma Sharpless laid down her cards. "Let him go on, Tom," she said decisively. "We have no ban of silence in this house."

At a nod from Clyde, the Health Master continued: —

"Always the taboo of silence hedged the Monster about and protected him; and men secretly revolted against it, yet were restrained from speech by the fear of public dishonor. So, in time, he came to have a Scarlet Court of Shame, with his retinue of slaves, whose duty it was to procure victims for his insatiate appetite. But this service availed his servitors nothing in forbearance, for, sooner or later, his breath of fiery venom blasted and withered them, one and all.

"One refuge only did the people seek against the Monster. At every doorpost of the city stood a

## THE HEALTH MASTER

veiled statue of the supposed Goddess and Protectress of the Household, worshiped under the name of *Modesty*, and to her the people appealed for succor and protection. Also they invoked her vengeance against such as spoke the name of the Monster, and bitter were the penalties wrought upon these in her name. Nevertheless there arose martyrs whose tongues could not be silenced by any fear.

“One was a brave priest who stood in his pulpit unashamed and spoke the terrible truth of the Monster, bidding his hearers arise and band themselves together and strike a blow for their homes and their dear ones. But the people hurried forth in dread, and sought refuge before the Veiled Idol; and the priest’s words rang hollow in the empty tabernacle; and his church was deserted and crumbled away in neglect, so that the fearful said: —

“Behold the righteous wrath which follows the breaking of the prescribed silence.’

“Again, a learned and pious physician and healer gathered the young men about him in the market-place to give them solemn warning against the Monster and his scarlet slaves. But his words returned upon himself, and he was branded with shame as one who worshiped not [the Veiled Goddess, and was presently driven forth from his own place into the wilderness.

## PLAIN TALK

“Then there came into the hall of the City Fathers a woman with disheveled hair and tear-worn cheeks, who beat upon her breast and cried: —

“‘Vengeance, O Wise and Great Ones! My son, my little son went to the public baths, and the venom of the Monster was upon the waters, and my son is blind forever. What will ye do, that others may not suffer my grief?’

“And the Wise and Great Ones spoke together and said: —

“‘Surely this woman is mad, that she thus fouls her lips.’ And they drove her out of their presence.

“From among their own number there came a terror and a portent. For their Leader, who had been stricken in youth, but thought himself to have thrown off the toils of the Monster, rose in his place and spoke in a voice that piped and shook: —

“‘Because no man taught me in my unripe days, I strayed into the paths of the Scarlet One. For the space of a generation I hoped; but now the clutch is upon me again, and I die. See to it, O my Fellows, that our youth no longer perish in their ignorance.’

“So he passed out from the place of honor; and the strength of his mind and his body was loosened until he died. But, rather than violate the taboo, the Wise and Great Ones gave a false name to his death, and he was buried under a graven lie.

## THE HEALTH MASTER

“Finally there came to the Council Hall one with the fire of martyrdom in his eyes.

“‘Though I perish,’ he said, ‘I and mine, yet will I speak the truth for once. My daughter I have given in marriage, and the Monster has entered into the house of her marriage, and from henceforth she must go, a maimed creature, sexless and childless, to the end of her days. Shame upon this city, that it endures such shame; for my daughter is but one of many.’

“‘The shame be yours,’ replied the Fathers, ‘that you bring scandal upon your own. Go forth into exile, in the name of the Veiled Goddess, *Modesty*, beneath whose statue we meet.’

“But the man strode forward, and with a violent hand plucked the veil from the statue.

“‘Not the Protectress of Homes,’ he cried, ‘but the ally of the Monster. Not the Goddess, *Modesty*, but her sham sister, *Prudery*. Down with false gods!’

“So saying, he threw the idol to the ground, where it was shattered into a thousand pieces. With those pieces the Fathers stoned him to death.

“But in many households that night there was a baring of the Veiled Idol. And ever, behind the folds, was revealed not the pure gaze of the True Goddess, but the simper and leer of *Prudery*, mute accomplice of *Shame*.

## PLAIN TALK

“Thus did the city awake. Fearfully it gathered its forces; tremblingly it prepared its war upon the Monster. But the Monster is intrenched. Its venom runs through the blood of the people, poisoning it from generation to generation, so that neither the grandsons nor the great-grandsons of those who stoned the martyr to the False Goddess shall escape the curse. The Prophet has said it: ‘Even unto the third and the fourth generations.’

“*De te fabula narratur*; of YOU is the fable narrated.

“The Land of Parables is your country.

“The stricken city is your city.

“The Monster coils at your doorway, lying in wait for your loved ones; and no prudence, no precaution, no virtue can guard them safely against his venom so long as the Silence of Prudery holds sway.”

Dr. Strong let the newspaper fall on his lap, and looked slowly from face to face of the silent little group.

“Need I tell you the name of the destroyer?” he asked.

“Not me,” said Mrs. Clyde in a low tone. “It is a two-headed monster, is n’t it?”

The Health Master nodded. “And because we all fear to utter the words ‘venereal disease,’ our

## THE HEALTH MASTER

children grow up in the peril of the Monster whose two allies are Vice and Ignorance.”

“One editor in this town, at least, has some gumption,” commented Grandma Sharpless, peering over her spectacles at the sheet which Dr. Strong had let fall. “Which paper is it?”

“None, if you must know. The fact is, I read that allegory into the newspaper, not out of it.”

“Then it was your own?” asked Mrs. Clyde.

“Such as it is, mine own. But the inspiration came from this headline.” He pointed to a legend in heavy type: —

### DIVORCE IN THE INSIDE SET

AFTER SIX MONTHS OF MARRIAGE, MRS. BARTLEY STARR SEEKS FREEDOM — NATURE OF CHARGES NOT MADE PUBLIC

“Do you know what is back of it, Strong?” asked Clyde.

“The ruin of a life. Bartley Starr has been a ‘rounder.’ With the curse of his vices upon him he married a young and untaught girl.” He repeated with slow significance a passage from the allegory. “The Monster entered into the house of her marriage, and from henceforth she must go, a maimed creature, sexless and childless, to the end of her days.”

## PLAIN TALK

“Oh, no, no!” burst out Mrs. Clyde. “Not poor little, lovely, innocent Margaret Starr!”

“Too innocent,” retorted the Health Master. “And more than innocent; ignorant.”

“But Bartley Starr!” said Mr. Clyde. “Who would have supposed him such a scoundrel? And with his bringing-up, too!”

“The explanation lies in his bringing-up.”

“Nonsense! Henry Starr is as upright a man and as good a father as you can find in Worthington.”

“The former, perhaps. Not the latter, certainly. He is a worshiper of the False Veiled Goddess, I suspect. Hence Bartley’s tragedy.”

“Do you blame Bartley’s viciousness upon his father?” demanded Mrs. Clyde.

“In part, at least. I happen to know a good deal about this case. Bartley got his sex-education or miseducation from chance talk at school. He took that to college with him, and there, unguided, fell into vicious ways. I don’t suppose his father ever had a frank talk with him in his life. And I judge that little Mrs. Starr’s mother never had one with her, either. Look at the result!”

“But boys find out about such things some way,” said Mr. Clyde uneasily.

“Some way? What way? And from whom? How much has Manny found out?”

“I don’t know,” said Manny’s father.

## THE HEALTH MASTER

“Why don’t you know?” persisted the Health Master relentlessly. “You are his father, and, what is more, his friend.”

“Why must Manny know?” cried Mrs. Clyde. “Surely my son is n’t going to wallow in that sort of foulness.”

“Pray God he is not!” said Grandma Sharpless, turning her old, shrewd, kind face, the eyes bright and soft with feeling, toward her daughter. “But, oh, my dear, my dear, the bitterest lesson we mothers have to learn is that our children are of the common flesh and blood of humanity.”

“Manny is clean-minded and high-spirited,” said Strong. “But not all of his companions are. Not a month ago I heard one of the older boys in his class assuring some of his fellows, in the terms of the most damnable lie that ever helped to corrupt youth, ‘Why, it ain’t any worse than an ordinary cold.’”

“That was a stock phrase of the young toughs when I was a boy,” said Mr. Clyde. “So it still persists, does it?”

“Any worse than an ordinary cold?” repeated Mrs. Clyde, looking puzzled. “What did he mean?”

“Gonorrhœa,” said Dr. Strong.

Mrs. Clyde winced back and half-rose from her chair.



## PLAIN TALK

“Are you going?” asked the Health Master rather grimly. “Must I be mealy-mouthed on this subject? Here I am, trying to tell you something of the most deadly import, and am I to choose perfumed words and pick rose-tinted phrases?”

“Speak out, Strong,” said the head of the house. “I’ve been rather expecting this.”

“First, then: you need not worry about Manny. I talked to him, long ago.”

“But he’s only a boy, still,” said Mrs. Sharpless involuntarily.

“He enters college this fall. And I’ve made sure that he won’t take with him the ‘no worse than a cold’ superstition about a disease which has wrecked the lives of thousands of Bartley Starrs.”

“But I thought that Starr’s was the — the other and worse form,” said Mr. Clyde.

“Plain talk,” adjured the Health Master. “You thought it was syphilis?”

“Yes.”

“And you thought syphilis worse than gonorrhœa?”

“Surely!”

“Well, it is n’t. I’ll explain that in detail presently. “Just now —”

“Do I have to hear all of this,” appealed Mrs. Clyde, with a face of piteous disgust.

## THE HEALTH MASTER

“Well, *I* told Manny,” said the Health Master in measured tones. “Must I be the one to tell Julia, too?”

“Julia!” cried the mother. “Tell Julia?”

“Some one must tell her.”

“That child?”

“Fourteen years old, and in high school. Last year there were ten known cases of venereal disease among the high-school girls.”<sup>1</sup>

“How horrible!”

“Bad enough. I have known worse elsewhere. In a certain small city school, several years ago, it was discovered that there was an epidemic of vice which involved practically the whole school. And it was discovered only when venereal disease broke out. Our school authorities are just beginning to learn that immorality must be combated by watchfulness and quarantine, just as contagious disease must.”

“How was the outbreak in our high school found out?” asked Grandma Sharpless.

“In a curious and tragic way. One of the boys developed a sudden and serious inflammation of the eyes. At first the ophthalmologist to whom he went was puzzled. Then he began to suspect. A bacteriological analysis showed that it was a case of

<sup>1</sup> These and the following instances are based on actual and established medical findings.

## PLAIN TALK

gonorrhoeal infection. It was by a hair's breadth that the less infected eye was saved. The sight of the other is lost. Examination showed that the disease was confined to the eyes. By a careful bit of medical detective work, the physician and the principal of the high school determined that the infection came from the use of a bath-towel in the house of a fellow-pupil where the patient had spent two or three nights. This pupil was examined and found to have a fully developed case, which he had concealed, in fear of disgrace. Consequently, the poison is now so deep-seated in him that it may be years before he is cured. He made a confession implicating a girl in the class above him. A rigid investigation followed which brought the other cases to light."

"I shall take Julia out of that school at once," said Mrs. Clyde, half-crying.

"No," controverted the Health Master gently. "I should n't do that. In the complex life of a city like this, it is impossible to shelter a girl completely and permanently. Better armor her with knowledge. Besides, the danger in the school, being discovered, is practically over now. In time, and using this experience as a lever with the school authorities, we hope to get a course of lectures on hygiene established, including simple sex-instruction.

## THE HEALTH MASTER

Meantime this must be carried on by the mothers and fathers."

"But what am I to say to Julia?"

"That is what I am going to tell you," replied the Health Master, "and look to you to pass on the truth in terms too plain to admit of any misunderstanding. First, does she know what womanhood and motherhood mean?"

"Not yet, I think. She seems so young. And it's so hard to speak of those things. But I thought I would try to explain to her some day."

"Some day? At once! How can you think her too young? She has already undergone the vital change from childhood to womanhood, and without so much as a word of warning or reassurance or explanation as to what it means."

"Not quite without," put in Grandma Sharpless quietly.

"Good!" approved the Health Master. "But be sure that the explanation is thorough. Tell her the significance of sex and its relation to reproduction and life. If you don't, be sure that others will. And their version may well be in terms which would make a mother shudder to hear."

"Who would tell her?" asked Mrs. Clyde.

"Her playmates. Do you think that girls don't talk of the mysteries as much as boys? If so, you're sadly in error. The first essential is that she should

## PLAIN TALK

understand truly and wisely what it means to be a woman. That is fundamental. And now for the matter of venereal disease. I am going to lay certain facts before you all, and you can hand on to the children such modifications as you deem best.

“First, gonorrhœa, because it is the worse of the two. That is not the accepted notion, I know: but the leading specialists one by one have come around to the view, that, by and large, it does more damage to humanity than the more greatly dreaded syphilis. For one thing, it is much more widespread. While there are no accurate statistics covering the field in general, it is fairly certain that forty per cent of all men over thirty-five in our larger cities have had the disease at some time.”

“That does n’t seem possible,” broke in Mr. Clyde.

“Not to you, because you married early, and your associations have been largely with family, home-loving men. But ask any one of the traveling salesmen in your factory his view. Your traveling man is the Ulysses of modern life, ‘knowing cities and the hearts of men.’ I think that you’ll find that compared with the ‘commercial’ view, my forty per cent is optimistic.”

“But it is easily curable, is n’t it?” asked Mrs. Clyde, insensibly yielding to the Health Master’s matter-of-fact tone, and finding, almost insensibly,

## THE HEALTH MASTER

that her interest in the hygienic problem had overcome her shamed reluctance to speak of it.

“Often in the early stages. But it is very uncertain. And once firmly fixed on the victim, it is one of the most obstinate and treacherous of diseases. It may lie dormant for months or even years, deceiving its victim into thinking himself wholly cured, only to break out again in full conflagration, without warning.

“This is the history of many ruined marriages. Only by the most searching tests can a physician make certain that the infection is stamped out. Probably no disease receives, on the average, such harmful treatment by those who are appealed to to cure it. The reason for this is that the young man with his first ‘dose’ — that loathsome, light term of description! — is ashamed to go to his family physician, and so takes worthless patent medicines or falls into the hands of some ‘Men’s Specialist’ who advertises a ‘sure cure’ in the papers. These charlatans make their money, not by skillful and scientific treatment, of which they know nothing, nor by seeking to effect a cure, but by actually nourishing the flame of the disease, so as to keep the patient under their care as long as possible, all the time building up fat fees for themselves. If they were able, as they claim, to stop the infection in a few days at a small fee, they could n’t make

## PLAIN TALK

money enough to pay for the scoundrelly lies which constitute their advertisements. While they are collecting their long-extended payments from the victim, the infection is spreading and extending its roots more and more deeply, until the unfortunate may be ruined for life, or even actually killed by the ravages of the malignant germs.”

“I did n’t suppose that it was ever fatal,” said Clyde.

“Oh, yes. I’ve seen deaths in hospitals, of the most agonizing kind. But it is by virtue of its by-products, so to speak, that gonorrhœa is most injurious and is really more baneful to the race than syphilis. The organism which causes it is in a high degree destructive to the eyes. Newborn infants are very frequently infected in this way by gonorrhœal mothers. Probably a quarter of all permanent blindness in this country is caused by gonorrhœa. The effect of the disease upon women is disastrous. Half of all abdominal operations on married women, excluding appendicitis, are the results of gonorrhœal infection from their husbands. A large proportion of sterility arises from this cause. A large proportion of the wives of men in whom the infection has not been wholly eradicated pay the penalty in permanently undermined health. And yet the superstition endures that ‘it’s no worse than a bad cold.’”

## THE HEALTH MASTER

“There is no such superstition about syphilis, at least,” remarked Clyde.

“No. The very name is a portent of terror, and it is well that it should be so. The consequence is that the man who finds himself afflicted takes no chances, as a rule. He goes straight to the best physician he can find, and obeys orders under terror of his life. Thus and thus only, he often is cured. Terrible as syphilis is, there is this redeeming feature: we can tell pretty accurately when the organism which causes it is eliminated. Years after the disease itself is cured, however, the victim may be stricken down by the most terrible form of paralysis, resulting from it.”

“Is n't the Ehrlich treatment regarded as a sure cure?” asked Mrs. Sharpless.

“No cure is sure. Salvarsan, skillfully administered, is as near a specific as any known form of treatment. But we don't know whether it has any effect at all upon locomotor ataxia or general paralysis, the after effects, which may destroy the patient fifteen or twenty years after the actual disease has been cured. All locomotor ataxia and all general paralysis come from syphilis. And these diseases are not only incurable, but are as nearly a hell on earth as poor humanity is ever called upon to endure. Of course, you know that a man who is base enough to marry with syphilis dooms his chil-



## PLAIN TALK

dren. Fortunately seventy-five or eighty per cent of the offspring of such marriages die in infancy or early childhood. The rest grow up deficient in mind or body or both. Upwards of ten per cent of all insanity is syphilitic in its origin.

“Both venereal diseases are terribly contagious. Innocence is no protection. Syphilis may be contracted from a drinking-cup or eating-utensil, or from the lips of an infected person having an open sore on the mouth. Gonorrhœa is spread by towels, by bathtubs, or from contaminated toilets. No person, however careful, is immune from either of the ‘red plagues.’ And yet the public is just beginning to be educated to the peril.”

“Why would n’t that be a good topic for the Woman’s Club to discuss?” asked Grandma Sharpless.

“Splendid!” said Dr. Strong. “That is, if they would allow you to talk about it.”

“*Allow me!*” The old lady’s firm chin tilted up sharply. “Who’s going to put the ban of silence on me?”

“Nobody, I dare say, if you make up your mind to speak,” replied Dr. Strong, smiling. “But some will probably try. Would you believe that, only a short time since, a professor of hygiene in one of our leading universities had to abandon a course of lectures to the students because the wives of the

## THE HEALTH MASTER

faculty and trustees objected to his including venereal diseases in his course? And a well-known lecturer, who had been invited to speak on health protection before a list of colleges, suffered the indignity of having the invitation withdrawn because he insisted that he could not cover the ground without warning his hearers against the twin pestilences of vice.”

“Are the colleges so greatly in need of that sort of warning?” asked Mrs. Clyde.

“Subsequent records obtained from some of the protesting institutions showed that one third of the students had at some time been infected.”

“I’m glad you’ve told my boy,” said Mrs. Clyde, rising. “I’ll talk to my girls.”

“And I to the women,” said Mrs. Sharpless.

“Then I’d better make a list, for both of you, of the literature on the subject which you will find useful,” said the Health Master. “I’ll give it to you later.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The list of publications on the sex problem and venereal disease recommended by the Health Master to the Clyde family was as follows: —

Published by the California Social Hygiene Society, Room 256, U.S. Custom House, San Francisco, Calif.: *The Four Sex Lies, When and How to Tell the Children, A Plain Talk with Girls about their Health and Physical Development*. Published by the Detroit Society for Sex Hygiene, Wayne Co. Medical Society Building, Detroit, Mich.: *To the Girl who does not Know, A Plain Talk with Boys*. Published by the Chicago Society of Social Hygiene, 305 Reliance Building, Chicago, Ill.: *Self Protection, Family Protection, Community Protection*. Pub-

## PLAIN TALK

For a time after the women had left, the two men sat silent.

“Strong,” said Mr. Clyde presently, “who is Bartley Starr’s physician?”

“Dr. Emery.”

“Why did n’t he warn him not to marry?”

“He did. He positively forbade it.”

“And Starr married that young girl in the face of that prohibition?”

“He thought he was cured. Dr. Emery could n’t say positively that he was n’t. He could only beg him to wait another year. Starr had n’t the courage — or the principle; he feared scandal if he postponed the wedding. So he disregarded the warning and now the scandal is upon him with tenfold weight.”

“Is n’t there any law for such cases?”

“Not in this state. Indiana requires that parties to a marriage swear to their freedom from venereal disease and certain other ailments. Other states have followed suit. Every state ought to.”

“Why did n’t Dr. Emery go to the girl’s father, then?”

lished by the Maryland Society for Social Hygiene, 15 East Pleasant Street, Baltimore, Md.: *The So-Called Sexual Necessity in Man, The Venereal Diseases*. Published by the American Federation for Sex Hygiene, 105 West 40th St., N.Y. City: List of Publications of the Constituent Societies, *The Teaching of Sex Hygiene, Sex Instruction as a Phase of Social Education*. Published by the Society of Sanitary and Moral Prophylaxis: *The Sex Problem, Health and the Hygiene of Sex*.

## THE HEALTH MASTER

“Because of our damnable law,” returned the Health Master with a sudden and rare access of bitterness.

“You mean that the law forbids?”

“It holds the physician liable for any professional confidence violated.” Dr. Strong rose and paced up and down the room, talking with repressed energy. “Therein it follows medical ethics in its most conservative and baneful phase. The code of medical conduct provides that a physician is bound to keep secret all the private affairs of a patient, learned in the course of practice. One body, the American Institute of Homœopathy, has wisely amended its code to except those cases where ‘harm to others may result.’ That amendment was passed with particular reference to venereal disease.”

“What about contagious disease?” asked Mr. Clyde. “Does n’t the law require the physician to report diphtheria, for instance, and thus violate the patient’s confidence?”

“Certainly it does. All schools recognize that principle of protection to the public. Yet, in the case of syphilis or gonorrhœa, when the harm to the public health is far greater than from any ‘reportable’ disease except tuberculosis, the physician must hold his peace, though he sees his patient pass out of his hands bearing fire and sword and

## PLAIN TALK

poison to future generations. There's the Ban of Silence in its most diabolical form!"

Mr. Clyde regarded his household physician keenly. "I've never before seen you so stirred," he observed.

"I've reason to be stirred." The Health Master whirled suddenly upon his friend and employer. "Clyde, you've never questioned me as to my past."

"No."

"Have you never wanted it cleared up?"

"No."

"You've always been willing to take me on trust?"

"Yes."

"And I appreciate it. But now I'm going to tell you how I happened to come to you, a broken and ruined man."

"Think it over, Strong," advised Mr. Clyde. "Don't speak now. Not that it would make any difference to me. I know you. If you were to tell me that you had committed homicide, I'd believe that it was a necessary and justifiable homicide."

"Suicide, rather," returned the other with a mirthless laugh; "professional suicide. I'll speak now, if you don't object."

"Go ahead, then, if it will ease your mind."

"I'm a lawbreaker, Clyde. I did, years ago,

## THE HEALTH MASTER

what you thought Emery should have done. I deliberately violated the profession's Ban of Silence. The man was my patient, in the city where I had built up a good high-class practice. He had contracted gonorrhœa and I had treated him for a year. The infection seemed to be rooted out. But I knew the danger, and when he told me that he was engaged to be married, to a girl of my own set and a valued friend, I was horror-stricken. I pleaded, argued, and finally threatened. It was no use. He was the spoiled child of a wealthy family, impatient of any thwarting. One day the suspicions of the girl's mother were aroused. She came to me in deep distress. I told her the truth. The engagement was broken. The man did not bring suit against me, but his family used their financial and social power to persecute and finally drive me out of the city, a nervous wreck. That's my history."

"You could have protected yourself by telling the true facts," suggested Clyde.

"Yes: but that would have been an unforgivable breach of confidence. The public had no right to the facts. The girl's family had."

"Then they should have come to your rescue with the truth."

"I bound them to secrecy."

Slowly Mr. Clyde rose, walked over, picked up the paper with the staring headlines, folded it, laid

## PLAIN TALK

it on the table, and, in passing the physician, set a hand, as if by chance, upon his shoulder. From so undemonstrative a man the action meant much.

“So,” he said with affectionate lightness, “my Chinese physician had been fighting dragons before he ever came to us; worse monsters than he’s been called upon to face, since. That was a splendid defeat, Strong.”

“A bitter one,” said the Health Master; “and by the same old Monster, in another manifestation that we’ve been fighting here. We’ve downed him now and again, you and I, Clyde. But he’s never killed: only scotched. He’s the universal ally of every ill that man hands on to man, and we’ve only to recognize him under the thousand and one different forms he assumes to call him out to battle under his real name.”

“And that is?” inquired Clyde.

“Ignorance,” said the Health Master.

THE END

The Riverside Press  
CAMBRIDGE . MASSACHUSETTS  
U . S . A

10





Date Due

RA431F13

BOSTON UNIVERSITY

The health master,



1 1719 00449 20

